

OSA

OHIO SALON ASSOCIATION

March 16, 2018

Dear Representative:

We are writing to ask for your support and expeditious passage of the occupational licensure reforms to Ohio's cosmetology industry contained in Sub. HB 189 next Wednesday, March 21, 2018. The announcement this week of more private cosmetology schools closing makes it more important than ever to pass the reforms contained in Sub. HB 189. Six additional school closures were announced bringing the total number to 28 closures since May 2015 (around 30%). In addition, we have included a few items raised by opponents that we are willing to work on in the Senate if the bill is favorably passed off the House floor.

Sub. HB 189 will:

- 1) Support Ohio's Attainment Goal 2025, that includes:
 - a) helping more Ohioans compete for quality jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and lead to career advancement;
 - b) removing barriers to education and employment for individuals;
 - c) helping Ohio employers find the talent they need to succeed and grow;
 - d) providing effective and efficient job training aligned to in-demand occupations and employer needs resulting in workplace-valued credentials; and
 - e) assisting in achieving the attainment goal of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Higher Education to have 65% of Ohioans ages 25 to 65 achieve a credential/license or degree by 2025. (Ohioans are currently at 43% of that attainment goal.)
- 2) **Lower hours to reduce the barrier for women, men and minorities to enter the beauty industry.**
The bill:
 - a) supports the notion that government should only mandate the minimum number of hours necessary to ensure safe and sanitary cosmetology practices as a barrier to entry into the profession – **1,000 hours is the correct requirement** – though some believe this is still too many hours;
 - b) equalizes the government mandated hours between public and private schools. Public schools in Ohio are already teaching at 1,000 hours and producing graduates who are entering the workforce with similar graduation rates, licensure rates and earning potential;
 - c) maintains high training standards without mandating an additional 500 hours on private school students. A national study as well as salon owners indicate that **more time in school does not make the student more job ready**;
 - d) acknowledges that there are currently more public students entering the profession at 1,000 hours of training rather than private schools at 1,500 hours;
 - e) ensures private schools are still able to obtain federal funding for students at 1,000 hours, can require 500 additional hours and charge whatever they want for tuition – the question is whether students will be willing to pay for and attend such programs – the free market will decide; and,
 - f) creates an **apprenticeship option** for future cosmetology students to earn a wage while they learn about the beauty industry. Under today's 1,500-hour program students are forced to pay tuition and provide services to the public in school clinics without compensation for hundreds of hours.

3) **Stop Ohio law from unfairly requiring private cosmetology education mandating 1,500 hours at the expense of students when public schools already teach at 1,000 hours.** There is no risk to public safety if a cosmetologist attending a private school achieves 1,000 hours for a license just like the public school student does today. In Ohio today:

- Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) attend **150 hours** of training.
- Police officers attend **695 hours** of training.
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) attend **1376 hours** of training.
- Paramedics attend **800 hours** of training.

4) **Make Ohio a "RECIPROCITY-IN" state--our focus must be on job opportunities in Ohio.** Many states do not require licensees to take any additional education or even an exam when seeking reciprocity after one to two years of practicing as was indicated by a recent LSC review. The bill:

- a) removes the requirement of taking exams in Ohio if already licensed in another state;
- b) removes the requirement that the standards in Ohio for obtaining the license the applicant seeks are substantially equal to the other state or country's requirements;
- c) allows licensees to enter the workforce sooner with less debt;
- d) permits work experience/hours to count towards licensing hours when seeking to transfer a license to another state;
- e) requires the Ohio Board to use a national exam which makes our licensees more marketable in other states; and,
- f) maintains high standards, but makes it easier to practice in Ohio than in most states.

Although private school opponents have refused to attend interested party meetings we have addressed several issues raised by them and have highlighted the changes below. These changes are in Sub. HB 189. The substitute bill:

- a) permits **pre-graduate testing** to help increase licensure rates;
- b) returns **manicuring hours** from 100 to 200;
- c) returns **esthetics hours** from 300 to 600;
- d) removes the **5-year experience requirement** for instructors;
- e) removes the language increasing the **surety bond** from \$10,000 to \$100,000 for schools; and,
- f) requires **salons and schools of cosmetology to work in partnership** to establish the apprenticeship program.

As mentioned above, the OSA has been trying to address as many of the opponents concerns as possible throughout this legislative process. We are committed to working on the following issues raised by the opponents in the Senate if Sub. HB 189 passes out of the House:

Opponents concern: *Getting rid of the advanced license is deregulating our profession.*

- **OSA Response:** The advanced license doesn't provide students with marketable skills that garner a higher wage and is not recognized in other states. Since it was created a few years ago schools did not adapt and work to provide input on curriculum to make it valuable. Schools can still offer 1,500 hours' worth of classes or any other advanced classes they wish. There is no law preventing them from offering classes that exceed the minimum. And funding is available for up to 1,500 hours so they can get paid. The state should only legislate minimums for occupational licenses that are barriers to entry into a profession. In reality private schools combine the initial license at 1,500 hours and the advanced license at 300 hours and require students to attend and pay for an 1,800-hour program. This cannot be the case in the future.
- **OSA Compromise:** The OSA will support changing Sub. HB 189 in the Senate to preserve the Advance License for those licensees as of the effective date of the bill, so those individuals can indefinitely renew this license. This still provides any school the opportunity to create an Advanced

Certificate program, but such a program will not carry with it state mandated hours. Schools are free to provide cosmetology programs above the 1,000-hour requirement under Sub. HB 189 – the question is whether students will pay for the additional training and education – the free market will decide.

Opponents concern: *Natural Hair Styling license is valuable and should stay. It negatively affects ethnic populations to get rid of it including salon owners.*

- **OSA Response:** The first time OSA heard opposition to removing the Natural Hair Stylist license came on Wednesday, March 7th in the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee hearing on Sub. HB 189.
- This license is not widely utilized—and it is quite burdensome at 450 hours of education to sit for the licensing exam. For instance, based on the Board's 2017 Annual Report there were 5 active and one new individuals with a natural hair stylist license, one active and one new individuals had a natural hair stylist instructor license, 34 active and 45 new individuals had an advanced natural hair stylist license, and there were 14 active and 4 newly licensed natural hair stylist salons. Compare this to 17,639 active and 2,708 new cosmetology licensees for the same period.
- **OSA compromise:** With that said, so long as the braiding registration stays in the law, we would compromise to allow the natural hair stylist license to stay in as well.

Opponents concern: *The way the definitions are in this bill make hair design the same as cosmetology at 800 hours.*

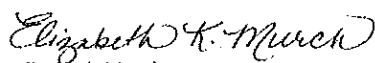
- **OSA Response:** The Ohio State Cosmetology and Barbering Board staff provided the language in the bill to clarify the practice of cosmetology which was included in the substitute bill.
 - Their intent was that cosmetology is defined as providing all the branches of cosmetology, and they believed the definition of cosmetology could not include cosmetology.
 - There has never been an intention of having a full cosmetology license 800-hour program as the opponents claim.
- **OSA compromise:** The OSA supports amending the final bill in the Senate to clarify and make clear that a full cosmetology license requires 1,000 hours, a hair design license requires 800 hours, an esthetics license requires 600 hours, a manicuring license requires 200 hours and a natural hair stylist license requires 450 hours.

The opponents should actually work with salon owners to address significant issues in the beauty industry, especially the fact that 28 private schools of cosmetology (or 30%) have abruptly closed their doors since May of 2015 and we expect more. These closures have required students to find alternate programs to finish their training very little to compensate them for these schools failing to help them become licensed and find employment in the beauty industry.

The Ohio Salon Association is focused on cosmetology student success, school success and addressing workforce issues for all salons and job providers in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We have attached a list of business owners as well as state and national associations supporting HB 189 and SB 129.

Please feel free to contact our lobbyist, Tony Fiore, at afiore@keglerbrown.com or 614-462-5428 if you have any questions about this legislation.


Elizabeth Murch
Executive Director


Tony Fiore
Legislative Counsel

Supporters of Ohio HB 189 and SB 129

Arthur Gray Holdings, Inc.	Holiday Hair	QuickGroome, Inc. - Roosters
Beauty Supply Outlet	Hyland MH Retreats, LLC	Quiddity Partners, LLC
Best Cuts	Hyland Properties, LLC	R.L.O., Inc.
Bhooshay Enterprises of Ohio, LLC	Institute for Justice	Rachelle King
Blue Co. Brands	Intercoiffure America/Canada International Salon/Spa	RamseyRooney & Co.
Borics Hair Care	Business Network	Regis Salon
Burben Investments, Inc.	j.calico, LLC	S&L Cuts, Inc.
Carlton Hair	JaNaMo Enterprises, Inc.	SARJNT, Inc.
Charles Penzone, Inc.	Jay-Mar Enterprises, LLC	Sassoon Salon
Cincy Clips, Inc.	JC Penney Salons	Saturday's Hair Salon
City Looks Salons	JM Elliott Enterprise, LLC	Sawyer Business Group, Inc.
Cool Cuts	Kerry and Anthony Sawyer	Scott Burandt
Cost Cutters	Lake House Holdings, LLC	SDM Partners, Inc.
Courtne Wesselman	Laventure, Inc.	Shaun Norton dba SportClips
CSJ Ventures, Inc.	LGC Properties Management	Signature Style Salons
DANDREA, LLC	LST Clips, Inc.	SmartStyle Hair Salons
Daniel Feiwell – No LLC	M&M Wardeiner, Inc.	SportClips
Demer Retail Ventures, LLC	Majicuts	SRL Clips, LLC
Eckert, Inc. dba Great Clips	MasterCuts	Studio Wish Salon
Empire Beauty Schools	Maxco, Inc.	Style America
Esquire Holdings, LLC	Maxxco, LLC	Supercuts
Famous Hair	Michael's Salon and Spa	Tasha Sheipline
Fiesta Salons	MMAO, LLC	TGF Hair Salon
FirstChoice HairCutters	NeCole Cumberlander	The 220 Group, Ltd.
Future of the Beauty Industry Coalition	NFIB/Ohio	Professional Beauty Association
Gem City Clips	North Coast Partners, LLC	The Visage Group
Gold Coast Ventures, LLC	Norton Clips, LLC	Tillery Enterprises, Inc.
Great Clips	Oakpoint Partners, Inc.	Tillery Salons, Inc.
Great Expectations	Ohio Chamber of Commerce	TJTKR Enterprises, Inc.
Hair Crafters	Ohio Salon Association	Trinity Leadership 6, LLC
Hair Masters	Outlooks for Hair	Trinity Leadership 7, LLC
Hair Plus	Panopoulos Salons	Uta
Head Start Haircare	Park 50 Clips, LLC	Vanity Ventures, Inc.
	Pro Cuts	We Care Hair

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First Edition

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Visit Kaiser Health News for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

Kaiser Health News: Congress Tackles The Opioid Epidemic. But How Much Will It Help?

The nation's opioid epidemic has been called today's version of the 1980s AIDS crisis. In a speech Monday, President Donald Trump pushed for a tougher federal response, emphasizing a tough-on-crime approach for drug dealers and more funding for treatment. And Congress is upping the ante, via a series of hearings — including one scheduled to last Wednesday through Thursday — to study legislation that might tackle the unyielding scourge, which has cost an estimated \$1 trillion in premature deaths, health care costs and lost wages since 2001. (Luthra, 3/19)

Kaiser Health News: Women In Medicine Who Experience Sexual Harassment Add Voices To #MeToo Movement

Annette Katz didn't expect to be part of a major social movement. She didn't set out to take on a major health organization. But that all began to change when a co-worker saw her fighting back tears and joined Katz to report to her union what amounted to a criminal sexual offense at a Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center in 2012 and 2013. Four years later, Katz, a licensed practical nurse at the hospital, testified in a court deposition that a male nursing assistant had shoved her into a linen closet and groped her and subjected her to an onslaught of lewd comments. (Jewett, 3/20)

Kaiser Health News: Adults Skipping Vaccines May Miss Out On Effective New Shingles Shot

Federal officials have recommended a new vaccine that is more effective than an earlier version at protecting older adults against the painful rash called shingles. But persuading many adults to get this and other recommended vaccines continues to be an uphill battle, physicians and vaccine experts say. "I'm healthy, I'll get that when I'm older," is what adult patients often tell Dr. Michael Munger when he brings up an annual flu shot or a tetanus-diphtheria booster or the new shingles vaccine. Sometimes they put him off by questioning a vaccine's effectiveness. (Andrews, 3/20)

California Healthline: The Juul's So Cool, Kids Smoke It In School

The students wait eagerly for their teachers to turn their backs. That's their cue to reach quietly for a small, sleek device they can easily conceal in their palms. It resembles a flash drive, but instead of computer files, this device stores nicotine. They take a hit, sucking on the device as they would a cigarette. Then, "they blow into their backpacks ... or into their sweater when the teacher isn't looking," said Elijah Luna, 16, a sophomore at Vista del Lago High School in Folsom, Calif., about 30 miles east of Sacramento. (Ibarra, 3/19)

The New York Times: Trump Offers Tough Talk But Few Details In Unveiling Plan To Combat Opioids

President Trump made his first visit to New Hampshire since the 2016 campaign on Monday, unveiling a plan to combat the opioid epidemic that includes a push for the death penalty for drug dealers and a crackdown on illegal immigrants. Mr. Trump spoke in a state with the nation's third-highest rate of deaths from overdoses and where opioids are a potent political issue. In a speech at a community college here, he offered up more tough talk than he did specifics about his plan, or how he would pay for it. (Haberman, Goodnough and Seelye, 3/19)

Politico: Trump Talks Up Death Penalty, Border Wall In Opioid Speech

"If we don't get tougher on drug dealers, we are wasting our time ... and that toughness includes the death penalty," Trump said — one of six times he invoked the death penalty during remarks in New Hampshire, a state hit hard by the addiction crisis. (Diamond and Ehley, 3/19)

Reuters: As U.S. Opioid Crisis Grows, Trump Calls For Death Penalty For Dealers

Trump said that he was working with Congress to find \$6 billion in new funding for 2018 and 2019 to fight the opioid crisis. The plan will also seek to cut opioid prescriptions by a third over three years by changing federal programs, he said. Addiction to opioids - mainly prescription painkillers, heroin and fentanyl - is a growing U.S. problem,

especially in rural areas. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42,000 people died from opioid overdoses in 2016. (3/19)

The Wall Street Journal: Trump Pledges To 'Get Very Tough,' Rein In Opioid Crisis

Mr. Trump's remarks at a community college here marked the formal unveiling of the next phase of his administration's plan to attempt to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic, now claiming the lives of more than 100 Americans a day through overdoses of prescription opioid pills, fentanyl and heroin. The plan includes a call for opioid prescriptions to be reduced by one-third within three years, in part by encouraging physicians to change their prescribing behavior. It also calls for guaranteed access to overdose-reversal drug naloxone and for the Justice Department to seek more death-penalty cases against drug traffickers. (Radnofsky, 3/19)

Los Angeles Times: Trump Talks Up Combating Opioids, Yet His Funding Shortfall And Medicaid Cuts Would Blunt His Plans

Although Trump once again spoke extensively about expanding the federal death penalty for drug dealers, his administration released a three-page list of proposals before his speech that ruled out any change to existing federal law, suggesting instead that the Justice Department would take a more aggressive stance toward those offenders already eligible to be put to death based on other capital offenses, such as drug-related murders. (Bierman and Levey, 3/19)

The Associated Press Fact Check: Trump Exaggerates Pros Of Anti-Opioid Ideas

President Donald Trump has laid out a new plan for tackling the deadly opioid epidemic that has ravaged communities across the nation. But some of the president's proposals have proven ineffective in the past. From renewing his call for "spending a lot of money" on commercials to scare young people from experimenting with drugs, to pushing for the death penalty for certain drug dealers, Trump's ideas are sometimes driven more by his gut instincts than past success. (3/20)

The Hill: Trump Says Proposals Targeting High Drug Prices Coming Soon

The administration will unveil a slate of proposals soon to address high prescription drug costs in the U.S., President Trump announced Monday. "You'll be seeing drug prices falling very substantially in the not-so-distant future, and it's going to be beautiful," President Trump said during a press conference on opioids in New Hampshire. (Hellmann, 3/19)

Reuters: Congress Struggles to Meet Deadline For Government Funding Bill

The U.S. Congress, facing a Friday midnight deadline, toiled on Monday to finish writing a \$1.2 trillion bill to fund the federal government through Sept. 30, as several

thorny issues lingered, including funding President Donald Trump's border wall. (Cowan, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Abortion Impasse May Shut Down Effort To Reduce Premiums

The polarizing politics of abortion have burst into the congressional budget debate, overwhelming bipartisan efforts to help millions of consumers who buy their own health insurance policies get relief from soaring premiums. On Monday, Senate and House Republicans released their latest plan to stabilize the Affordable Care Act's insurance markets. It calls for new federal money to offset the cost of treating the sickest patients and restores insurer subsidies that President Donald Trump terminated last year. (3/19)

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The Wall Street Journal: Policy Feuds Keep Spending Bill In Flux

A bipartisan congressional effort to shore up the Affordable Care Act was likely to be excluded from the bill, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) told House Republicans Monday evening, although Senate Republicans had been pushing late Monday to get it in the legislation. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) and Susan Collins (R., Maine) had hoped to include a plan from Mr. Alexander and Sen. Patty Murray (D., Wash.) to restore payments to insurers that offset their costs for providing mandatory subsidies to some low-income consumers on the ACA. Mr. Trump ended those payments last year, and many insurers raised premiums as a result. That meant people who don't get federal assistance to help with premiums saw their costs rise. (Peterson and Armour, 3/20)

Politico: Congress Closes In On Massive Spending Bill

A group of GOP senators and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden met with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday in a last-minute push to include the Obamacare subsidies, but were not optimistic. "I'm trying to make sure we get stabilization payments because if we don't, the insurance premiums are going to go up dramatically. And our Democratic friends are not being helpful," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said as he left McConnell's office. (Ferris, Everett and Bade, 3/19)

The Washington Post: Congressional Negotiators Work To Finalize Massive Spending Bill

The "omnibus" spending bill spreading billions across all agencies of government was supposed to be released Monday night to allow time for passage through the House and Senate before a government shutdown deadline at midnight Friday. But as evening arrived, bipartisan congressional leaders remained locked in negotiations on several

issues, and the eleventh-hour wrangling carried the potential to delay the bill's release. "We're trying to get to agreement," said Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Tex.), chairman of the House Rules Committee. "And this is where it's really good to measure three times and saw once." (Werner and DeBonis, 3/19)

Politico: Key GOP Senator Backs Shulkin As VA Secretary

A key Republican senator told President Donald Trump over the weekend that he had "full confidence" in Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, as Senate Republicans fret that Shulkin's rumored replacement would be impossible to confirm. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, said he made the case for keeping Shulkin during a discussion with the president about legislation on veterans care. Trump has been mulling firing Shulkin after reports that Shulkin used taxpayer money on a trip to Europe, and potentially replacing him with a Fox News personality, Pete Hegseth, according to The Washington Post. (Everett, 3/19)

Reuters: Supreme Court Mulls California Law on Anti-Abortion Facilities

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday tackles a dispute over whether a California law requiring Christian-based facilities that counsel pregnant women against abortion to post signs disclosing the availability of state-subsidized abortions and birth control violates their right to free speech. The nine justices are set to hear an hour of arguments in an appeal by a group of non-profit facilities called crisis pregnancy centers of a lower court ruling upholding the Democratic-backed 2015 law. (Chung, 3/20)

Politico: Pregnancy 'Crisis Centers' Take Abortion Case To Supreme Court

The state of California and abortion rights supporters counter that the law in question — the Reproductive FACT Act — is straightforward and doesn't trample anyone's rights. It simply requires the centers to display a written notice about abortion access. They don't have to discuss or counsel women about it. They just have to post it. Unlike other landmark abortion rights cases that have come before the court, National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (or NIFLA) v. Becerra, doesn't address when, where or under what circumstances a woman can terminate a pregnancy. (Colliver, 3/19)

The New York Times: Mississippi Bans Abortions After 15 Weeks; Opponents Swiftly Sue

Saying that he was "saving the unborn," Gov. Phil Bryant of Mississippi signed into law on Monday a measure that would ban almost all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Abortion rights supporters called it the earliest abortion ban in the country, and said it was an unconstitutional restriction that defied years of federal court precedent over the

limits states may impose on abortion providers. The only abortion clinic in the state quickly filed a complaint in federal court to block the law. (Fausset, 3/19)

Reuters: Mississippi Governor Signs Bill Banning Abortions After 15 Weeks

Republican Governor Phil Bryant said he was proud to sign the bill banning abortion after 15 weeks of gestation with some exceptions, according to a statement from spokesman Knox Graham. "I am committed to making Mississippi the safest place in America for an unborn child, and this bill will help us achieve that goal," Bryant said. (Simpson, 3/19)

The Hill: Anti-Abortion Dem's Political Career On The Line In Illinois

Progressive Democrats will try to topple anti-abortion rights Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.) in a primary Tuesday that has highlighted divisions within the party. First-time candidate Marie Newman has landed support from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and other progressives looking to move the party leftward and end Lipinski's career. (Hagen, 3/20)

Stat: As Checkpoint Inhibitors Spread, So Does Risk Of Deadly Heart Condition

Clinicians have seen remarkable progress in cancer patients treated with the class of immunotherapy drugs known as checkpoint inhibitors. In a small number of patients, they have also seen a rare but fatal cardiovascular side effect known as myocarditis. Now, with checkpoint inhibitors likely to be approved for a wider array of cancers, researchers are concerned that it's only a matter of time before more patients develop the same autoimmune response. They still don't know why. (Keshavan, 3/20)

Reuters: Roche Says Tecentriq, Chemo Cut Risk Of Death In Type Of Lung Cancer

Roche's immunotherapy Tecentriq plus chemotherapy cut the risk of disease worsening or death in advanced squamous lung cancer, but it did not yet show an overall survival benefit in this tough-to-treat disease, the Swiss drugmaker said Tuesday. A late-stage study, called IMpower131, demonstrated that Tecentriq combined with carboplatin and Abraxane boosted progression-free survival (PFS), compared with chemotherapy alone, in patients getting initial treatment. (Miller, 3/20)

The New York Times: Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach Of Racism For Black Boys

Black boys raised in America, even in the wealthiest families and living in some of the most well-to-do neighborhoods, still earn less in adulthood than white boys with similar backgrounds, according to a sweeping new study that traced the lives of millions of children. (Badger, Miller, Pearce and Quealy, 3/19)

NPR: African-American And Latino Children Often Diagnosed With Autism Later Than Their White Peers

Sherry Alvarez says she knew there was something different about her son since he was about 9 months old. Back then Sherry says his pediatrician told her there was nothing to worry about, " 'Boys are a little slower than girls, so let's just wait until his second birthday.' " We aren't using Sherry's son's name to protect his privacy. By her son's second birthday, Sherry says she was getting desperate. She didn't know why he wasn't talking yet or showing affection like other kids. At 2 1/2, he was referred to Children's Hospital Los Angeles. (Rentz, 3/19)

USA Today: Teen Suicide Is Soaring. Do Spotty Mental Health And Addiction Treatment Share Blame?

J.C. Ruf, 16, was a Cincinnati-area pitcher who died by suicide in the laundry room of his house. Tayler Schmid, 17, was an avid pilot and hiker who chose the family garage in upstate New York. Josh Anderson, 17, of Vienna, Va., was a football player who killed himself the day before a school disciplinary hearing. The young men were as different as the areas of the country where they lived. But they shared one thing in common: A despair so deep they thought suicide was the only way out. (O'Donnell and Saker, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Want To Avoid The Flu While Flying? Try A Window Seat
Worried about catching a cold or the flu on an airplane? Get a window seat, and don't leave it until the flight is over. That's what some experts have been saying for years, and it's perhaps the best advice coming out of a new attempt to determine the risks of catching germs on an airplane. (3/19)

Los Angeles Times: To Avoid Germs On An Airplane, Consider Booking A Window Seat

What you really need to watch out for is a flight attendant with a cough or runny nose. A single one of them can infect 4.6 passengers during a transcontinental flight. A group that dubbed itself the FlyHealthy Research Team came to these conclusions after flying back and forth from Atlanta to the West Coast on 10 flights and paying extremely close attention to the movements in the economy-class portion of the cabin. (Kaplan, 3/19)

The Associated Press: For Menopause Sex Discomfort, Gel Worked As Well As Hormone

In a study of women with menopause-related sexual discomfort, gels worked as well as prescription hormone tablets at reducing symptoms. The researchers say the results suggest low-cost, over-the-counter moisturizers might be the best option. Most women in the study reported some relief from their most bothersome symptoms — painful intercourse, vaginal dryness or itching — regardless of treatment. Still, not quite half the

women experienced what researchers considered a meaningful decline in symptom severity. (3/19)

The New York Times: When the Death Of A Family Farm Leads To Suicide

Fred Morgan was already deep in debt from rebuilding his milking barn after a fire when milk prices plunged in 2015, setting off an economic drought that is now entering its fourth year — the worst in recent memory for dairy farmers in New York State. Mr. Morgan, 50, saw no way to save the dairy farm in central New York State that he took over as a teenager from his ailing father and ran with his wife, Judy, and their son, Cody. (Kilgannon, 3/19)

Reuters: U.S. Judge Dismisses Tennessee Refugee Resettlement Lawsuit

A judge on Monday dismissed the state of Tennessee's lawsuit accusing the U.S. government of unconstitutionally coercing it into subsidizing the federal refugee resettlement program. Tennessee accused the government of invading its sovereignty by requiring it to provide Medicaid benefits to refugees, or else risk losing nearly \$7 billion of Medicaid funds annually, equal to about 20 percent of its state budget, if it refused. (Stempel, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Johns Hopkins Nurses Eye Unionizing Over Staffing, Benefits

Organizers say nurses at Johns Hopkins Hospital are overworked and underpaid compared with counterparts elsewhere and could form a union. The National Nurses United collective bargaining director for the mid-Atlantic region, Corey Lanham, tells The Baltimore Sun that nurse turnover at the hospital is high because of short staffing and declining benefits. (3/19)

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Morning Briefing: Summaries Of The News

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

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1. Congress Tackles The Opioid Epidemic. But How Much Will It Help?

President Trump, speaking Monday, called for a tough-on-crime federal approach. Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, legislative strategies to combat this pressing public health problem are gaining momentum, but experts are not certain these approaches will make a difference. (Shefali Luthra, 3/19)

2. Women In Medicine Shout #MeToo About Sexual Harassment At Work

Lawsuits and complaints about sexual harassment are piling up in the health care industry as women take on doctors, peers and co-workers. (Christina Jewett, Kaiser Health News, 3/20)

3. Adults Skipping Vaccines May Miss Out On Effective New Shingles Shot

Federal health officials recommend that adults get a number of vaccinations, including protections against shingles, the flu, pneumonia, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. But immunization rates are generally low. (Michelle Andrews, 3/20)

4. Political Cartoon: 'Border Collie?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Border Collie?'" by Hilary Price.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

THE MISSING AGENCY

Indictments announced —
Pharma pushing opioids!
Where was FDA?

- Ernest R. Smith

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please [Contact Us](#) and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

5. Trump Talks Tough On Drug Traffickers, Immigrants, But Leaves Out Funding Details For New Opioid Plan

"If we don't get tougher on drug dealers, we are wasting our time," President Donald Trump said in New Hampshire while offering an overview of his plan to fight the opioid crisis. While some advocates lauded elements of the blueprint, questions about additional money and a focus on punishment raised some concerns.

The New York Times: Trump Offers Tough Talk But Few Details In Unveiling Plan To Combat Opioids

President Trump made his first visit to New Hampshire since the 2016 campaign on Monday, unveiling a plan to combat the opioid epidemic that includes a push for the death penalty for drug dealers and a crackdown on illegal immigrants. Mr. Trump spoke in a state with the nation's third-highest rate of deaths from overdoses and where opioids are a potent political issue. In a speech at a community college here, he offered up more tough talk than he did specifics about his plan, or how he would pay for it. (Haberaman, Goodnough and Seelye, 3/19)

Politico: Trump Talks Up Death Penalty, Border Wall In Opioid Speech

"If we don't get tougher on drug dealers, we are wasting our time ... and that toughness includes the death penalty," Trump said — one of six times he invoked the death penalty during remarks in New Hampshire, a state hit hard by the addiction crisis. (Diamond and Ehley, 3/19)

Reuters: As U.S. Opioid Crisis Grows, Trump Calls For Death Penalty For Dealers
Trump said that he was working with Congress to find \$6 billion in new funding for 2018 and 2019 to fight the opioid crisis. The plan will also seek to cut opioid prescriptions by a third over three years by changing federal programs, he said. Addiction to opioids - mainly prescription painkillers, heroin and fentanyl - is a growing U.S. problem, especially in rural areas. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42,000 people died from opioid overdoses in 2016. (Rampton, 3/19)

The Hill: Trump Vows Tougher Borders To Fight Opioid Epidemic

Trump unveiled his plan to combat the epidemic in New Hampshire, a state that's been hit hard by the epidemic and one that Trump once referred to as a "drug-infested den." Trump spent a portion of his speech slamming sanctuary cities, promoting policies to beef up border security and blaming the lack of an extension for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program on Democrats. (Roubein, 3/19)

Bloomberg: Trump Calls For Death Penalty For Drug Dealers In Opioid Plan

Trump has vowed since his 2016 campaign to curb drug abuse, which caused more than 64,000 overdose deaths last year, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The president has attached the effort to his call for a wall along the southern U.S. border, saying it would cut the illegal flow of drugs and people who sell them. "Eventually the Democrats will agree with us" to build the wall and "to keep the damn drugs out," Trump said. (Sink, 3/19)

The Wall Street Journal: Trump Pledges To 'Get Very Tough,' Rein In Opioid Crisis
Mr. Trump's remarks at a community college here marked the formal unveiling of the next phase of his administration's plan to attempt to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic, now claiming the lives of more than 100 Americans a day through overdoses of prescription opioid pills, fentanyl and heroin. The plan includes a call for opioid prescriptions to be reduced by one-third within three years, in part by encouraging physicians to change their prescribing behavior. It also calls for guaranteed access to overdose-reversal drug naloxone and for the Justice Department to seek more death-penalty cases against drug traffickers. (Radnofsky, 3/19)

Los Angeles Times: Trump Talks Up Combating Opioids, Yet His Funding Shortfall And Medicaid Cuts Would Blunt His Plans

Although Trump once again spoke extensively about expanding the federal death penalty for drug dealers, his administration released a three-page list of proposals before his speech that ruled out any change to existing federal law, suggesting instead that the Justice Department would take a more aggressive stance toward those offenders already eligible to be put to death based on other capital offenses, such as drug-related murders. (Bierman and Levey, 3/19)

Modern Healthcare: Trump Calls For Death Penalty For Drug Traffickers

Advocates lauded some aspects of Trump's plan, such as establishing a national prescription-drug-monitoring program. It also seeks to boost drug abuse prevention efforts, improve opioid prescription practices and expand access to treatment. But the question of additional funding remains unanswered. (Johnson, 3/19)

Kaiser Health News: Congress Tackles The Opioid Epidemic. But How Much Will It Help?

The nation's opioid epidemic has been called today's version of the 1980s AIDS crisis. In a speech Monday, President Donald Trump pushed for a tougher federal response, emphasizing a tough-on-crime approach for drug dealers and more funding for treatment. And Congress is upping the ante, via a series of hearings — including one scheduled to last Wednesday through Thursday — to study legislation that might tackle

the unyielding scourge, which has cost an estimated \$1 trillion in premature deaths, health care costs and lost wages since 2001. (Luthra, 3/19)

The Associated Press Fact Check: Trump Exaggerates Pros Of Anti-Opioid Ideas
President Donald Trump has laid out a new plan for tackling the deadly opioid epidemic that has ravaged communities across the nation. But some of the president's proposals have proven ineffective in the past. From renewing his call for "spending a lot of money" on commercials to scare young people from experimenting with drugs, to pushing for the death penalty for certain drug dealers, Trump's ideas are sometimes driven more by his gut instincts than past success. (3/20)

The Hill: Trump Says Proposals Targeting High Drug Prices Coming Soon
The administration will unveil a slate of proposals soon to address high prescription drug costs in the U.S., President Trump announced Monday. "You'll be seeing drug prices falling very substantially in the not-so-distant future, and it's going to be beautiful," President Trump said during a press conference on opioids in New Hampshire. (Hellmann, 3/19)

In other news on the epidemic —

Stat: DOJ Weighing 'Major Litigation' Against Opioid Makers, Trump Says
President Trump spoke Monday of using federal prosecutors to pursue "major litigation" against drug manufacturers alleged to have played a role in creating a nationwide epidemic of opioid abuse. Speaking in New Hampshire at the White House's rollout of a national opioids strategy, the president expanded upon a Department of Justice release last month in which Attorney General Jeff Sessions pledged to "hold accountable those whose illegality has cost us billions of taxpayer dollars." (Facher, 3/19)

New Hampshire Public Radio: Opioid Crisis is Taking A Toll on Those On the Frontlines
The drug crisis in New Hampshire has left its mark on thousands of people - those struggling with addiction, their families, friends and co-workers. But increasing attention is being paid to another group bearing a burden from the epidemic: first responders and those working in the recovery field. (Sutherland, 3/19)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

6. Abortion Continues To Jam Up Spending Bill Negotiations As Shutdown Deadline Ticks Ever Closer

It's also unlikely that measures to shore up the health law marketplace will make it into the final version of the legislation. Lawmakers are facing down a third shutdown in as many months.

Reuters: Congress Struggles to Meet Deadline For Government Funding Bill

The U.S. Congress, facing a Friday midnight deadline, toiled on Monday to finish writing a \$1.2 trillion bill to fund the federal government through Sept. 30, as several thorny issues lingered, including funding President Donald Trump's border wall. (Cowan, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Abortion Impasse May Shut Down Effort To Reduce Premiums
The polarizing politics of abortion have burst into the congressional budget debate, overwhelming bipartisan efforts to help millions of consumers who buy their own health insurance policies get relief from soaring premiums. On Monday, Senate and House Republicans released their latest plan to stabilize the Affordable Care Act's insurance markets. It calls for new federal money to offset the cost of treating the sickest patients and restores insurer subsidies that President Donald Trump terminated last year. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 3/19)

The Wall Street Journal: Policy Feuds Keep Spending Bill In Flux

A bipartisan congressional effort to shore up the Affordable Care Act was likely to be excluded from the bill, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) told House Republicans Monday evening, although Senate Republicans had been pushing late Monday to get it in the legislation. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) and Susan Collins (R., Maine) had hoped to include a plan from Mr. Alexander and Sen. Patty Murray (D., Wash.) to restore payments to insurers that offset their costs for providing mandatory subsidies to some low-income consumers on the ACA. Mr. Trump ended those payments last year, and many insurers raised premiums as a result. That meant people who don't get federal assistance to help with premiums saw their costs rise. (Peterson and Armour, 3/20)

The Hill: House Leaves Out Obamacare Fix From Must-Pass Funding Bill

ObamaCare payments aimed at lowering premiums will not be included in the House's government funding bill, in a significant defeat for backers of the effort. Multiple GOP lawmakers leaving a conference meeting held Monday evening to discuss the omnibus funding bill said the payments are not being included, in large part because of a dispute with Democrats over abortion restrictions known as the Hyde Amendment. (Sullivan, 3/19)

The Hill: Senate Considers Vote To Add ObamaCare Fix To Spending Bill

The Senate is considering holding a vote on adding an ObamaCare stabilization

measure into a must-pass government funding bill in order to get lawmakers on record on the issue. The ObamaCare proposal is in serious jeopardy amid a dispute between the parties over abortion restrictions in the new funding aimed at lowering ObamaCare premiums. (Sullivan, 3/19)

Politico: Congress Closes In On Massive Spending Bill

A group of GOP senators and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden met with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday in a last-minute push to include the Obamacare subsidies, but were not optimistic. "I'm trying to make sure we get stabilization payments because if we don't, the insurance premiums are going to go up dramatically. And our Democratic friends are not being helpful," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said as he left McConnell's office. (Ferris, Everett and Bade, 3/19)

The Washington Post: Congressional Negotiators Work To Finalize Massive Spending Bill

The "omnibus" spending bill spreading billions across all agencies of government was supposed to be released Monday night to allow time for passage through the House and Senate before a government shutdown deadline at midnight Friday. But as evening arrived, bipartisan congressional leaders remained locked in negotiations on several issues, and the eleventh-hour wrangling carried the potential to delay the bill's release. "We're trying to get to agreement," said Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Tex.), chairman of the House Rules Committee. "And this is where it's really good to measure three times and saw once." (Werner and DeBonis, 3/19)

SUPREME COURT

7. Supreme Court To Hear Arguments On If 'Crisis Pregnancy Centers' Should Be Required To Talk About Abortion Options

The case, coming out of California, brings together two contentious issues: freedom of speech and abortion. However, whatever the court decides would affect the legality of the procedure.

Reuters: Supreme Court Mulls California Law On Anti-Abortion Facilities

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday tackles a dispute over whether a California law requiring Christian-based facilities that counsel pregnant women against abortion to post signs disclosing the availability of state-subsidized abortions and birth control violates their right to free speech. The nine justices are set to hear an hour of arguments in an appeal by a group of non-profit facilities called crisis pregnancy

centers of a lower court ruling upholding the Democratic-backed 2015 law. (Chung, 3/20)

Politico: Pregnancy 'Crisis Centers' Take Abortion Case To Supreme Court

The state of California and abortion rights supporters counter that the law in question — the Reproductive FACT Act — is straightforward and doesn't trample anyone's rights. It simply requires the centers to display a written notice about abortion access. They don't have to discuss or counsel women about it. They just have to post it. Unlike other landmark abortion rights cases that have come before the court, *National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (or NIFLA) v. Becerra*, doesn't address when, where or under what circumstances a woman can terminate a pregnancy. (Colliver, 3/19)

The Hill: Anti-Abortion Clinics Take First Amendment Case To Supreme Court

The Supreme Court on Tuesday will wade into a charged debate on abortion that will test the limits of the First Amendment. Anti-abortion clinics are challenging a California law that requires them to post notices informing women how to contact the state for information about obtaining a state-funded procedure. (Wheeler, 3/19)

WBUR: Abortion And Freedom Of Speech: A Volatile Mix Heads To The Supreme Court

On one side are self-identified "crisis pregnancy centers" that seek to prevent abortions, and on the other side is the state of California, which enacted a law to ensure that these centers do not intentionally or unintentionally mislead the women who walk through their doors. Supporters of the California law call the state's effort nothing more than seeking "truth in advertising." But anti-abortion pregnancy centers see the law as unconstitutional, compelling speech that turns them into mouthpieces for a government message they disagree with. (Totenberg, 3/20)

WOMEN'S HEALTH

8. Swift Legal Action Follows In Wake Of Miss. Governor Signing 15-Week Abortion Ban

"We are saving more of the unborn than any state in America, and what better thing we could do," Gov. Phil Bryant (R-Miss.) said. But some lawyers argue the law violates longstanding Supreme Court precedent that states may not ban abortions before they are deemed viable outside the womb, which is generally at about 24 to 26 weeks.

The New York Times: Mississippi Bans Abortions After 15 Weeks; Opponents Swiftly Sue

Saying that he was "saving the unborn," Gov. Phil Bryant of Mississippi signed into law

on Monday a measure that would ban almost all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Abortion rights supporters called it the earliest abortion ban in the country, and said it was an unconstitutional restriction that defied years of federal court precedent over the limits states may impose on abortion providers. The only abortion clinic in the state quickly filed a complaint in federal court to block the law. (Fausset, 3/19)

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The Associated Press: Quick Court Fight As Mississippi Sets 15-Week Abortion Ban
Within six hours, the governor signed a bill banning most abortions after 15 weeks of gestation, the state's lone abortion clinic sued, and a federal judge set a Tuesday morning hearing to consider blocking the restrictions. Abortion opponents sought the confrontation, hoping federal courts will ultimately prohibit abortions before a fetus is viable. Current federal law blocks such restrictions by states. (Amy and Mearhoff, 3/19)

Reuters: Mississippi Governor Signs Bill Banning Abortions After 15 Weeks
Republican Governor Phil Bryant said he was proud to sign the bill banning abortion after 15 weeks of gestation with some exceptions, according to a statement from spokesman Knox Graham. "I am committed to making Mississippi the safest place in America for an unborn child, and this bill will help us achieve that goal," Bryant said. (Simpson, 3/19)

PBS NewsHour: Mississippi Governor Signs Ban On Abortions After 15 Weeks
The Senate and House both passed HB 1510, also known as the Gestation Age Act, earlier this month. An earlier version of the bill said physicians found guilty of administering the procedure could face a felony conviction and up to 10 years of jail time. The latest version Bryant signed into law do not mention those consequences, instead saying physicians' medical licenses could be suspended or revoked. (Santhanam, 3/19)

In other abortion related news —

The Hill: Anti-Abortion Dem's Political Career On The Line In Illinois
Progressive Democrats will try to topple anti-abortion rights Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.) in a primary Tuesday that has highlighted divisions within the party. First-time candidate Marie Newman has landed support from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and other progressives looking to move the party leftward and end Lipinski's career. (Hagen, 3/20)

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VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

9. Prominent GOP Senator Voices Support For Shulkin As Trump Mulls Possible Replacement

Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) has made the case to President Donald Trump that VA Secretary David Shulkin has done "a great job" despite a few bumps in the road. Some reports have suggested Trump wants to replace him with Fox News personality Pete Hegseth, who Republicans know would be difficult to confirm in the Senate.

Politico: Key GOP Senator Backs Shulkin As VA Secretary

A key Republican senator told President Donald Trump over the weekend that he had "full confidence" in Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, as Senate Republicans fret that Shulkin's rumored replacement would be impossible to confirm. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, said he made the case for keeping Shulkin during a discussion with the president about legislation on veterans care. Trump has been mulling firing Shulkin after reports that Shulkin used taxpayer money on a trip to Europe, and potentially replacing him with a Fox News personality, Pete Hegseth, according to The Washington Post. (Everett, 3/19)

In other veterans health care news —

KCUR: Hundreds Of Veterans In Missouri And Kansas Lost Out On Care At Non-VA Facilities, Report Says

Almost 1,000 veterans in Missouri, Kansas and Illinois were denied care at non-VA facilities because their wait times were incorrectly reported, an audit released last week concludes. The report, by the Office of Inspector General for the Veterans Health Administration, found that 18 percent of appointments for new patients at VA facilities in the three states had wait times longer than 30 days. The facilities' own electronic scheduling systems, however, showed only 10 percent had wait times of more than 30 days. (Margolies, 3/19)

PHARMACEUTICALS

10. Remarkable Cancer Drugs Come With Fatal Side Effect For Some, And Researchers Don't Know Why

The class of drugs known as checkpoint inhibitors causes an inflammation of the heart muscles. As the use of the drugs expands, researchers are sure that more people will

develop deadly heart conditions. In other pharmaceutical news: FDA approval for rare drugs; lung cancer treatments; lawsuits over antipsychotic drug side effects; and right-to-try legislation.

Stat: As Checkpoint Inhibitors Spread, So Does Risk Of Deadly Heart Condition
Clinicians have seen remarkable progress in cancer patients treated with the class of immunotherapy drugs known as checkpoint inhibitors. In a small number of patients, they have also seen a rare but fatal cardiovascular side effect known as myocarditis. Now, with checkpoint inhibitors likely to be approved for a wider array of cancers, researchers are concerned that it's only a matter of time before more patients develop the same autoimmune response. They still don't know why. (Keshavan, 3/20)

Stat: FDA, Industry Ponder Changes To Clinical Trials For Rare Disease Treatments
Food and Drug Administration statisticians pondered changing how the agency uses statistics to approve drugs for rare disease at a public workshop Monday. The challenge, regulators said, is that there are so few patients who suffer from certain rare diseases that it might not be possible or feasible to do many rounds of traditional clinical trials. So, regulators and drug developers are looking at ways to import data collected in early studies — which are used to initially assess drug safety and efficacy — into the Phase 3 studies that the FDA uses to determine whether drugs should make it onto the market. (Swetlitz, 3/19)

Reuters: Roche Says Tecentriq, Chemo Cut Risk Of Death In Type Of Lung Cancer
Roche's immunotherapy Tecentriq plus chemotherapy cut the risk of disease worsening or death in advanced squamous lung cancer, but it did not yet show an overall survival benefit in this tough-to-treat disease, the Swiss drugmaker said Tuesday. A late-stage study, called IMpower131, demonstrated that Tecentriq combined with carboplatin and Abraxane boosted progression-free survival (PFS), compared with chemotherapy alone, in patients getting initial treatment. (Miller, 3/20)

Stat: Bristol-Myers, Otsuka Face Trial Over Antipsychotic And Compulsive Behavior
The first of hundreds of lawsuits filed by consumers who claim the Abilify antipsychotic caused compulsive behavior has been scheduled for trial in June after a federal judge tossed a bid by drug makers to dismiss the litigation. The bellwether trial would be the first to put a sustained spotlight on the extent to which the widely used medication has caused patients to succumb to uncontrollable urges to engage in impulsive gambling, shopping, eating, or sex. About 700 lawsuits have been filed in federal court in Florida and dozens more were filed in other states, mostly in New Jersey. (Silverman, 3/19)

The Hill: Former FDA Heads Speak Out Against 'Right To Try'
Four former heads of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are urging Congress to

abandon bills that would allow terminally ill patients access to experimental drugs not yet approved by the agency. The "right to try" bill failed in the House last week, but is likely to come up again this week. A similar bill passed the Senate last summer. (Hellmann, 3/19)

MEDICAID

11. Tennessee Lacks Legal Standing To Sue Over Medicaid Benefits For Refugees, Judge Rules

Tennessee had sued the government over its requirement that the state provide Medicaid benefits to refugees or risk losing funds. Meanwhile, the Tennessee House voted to direct the governor to take steps toward adding work requirements to the state's program.

Reuters: U.S. Judge Dismisses Tennessee Refugee Resettlement Lawsuit
A judge on Monday dismissed the state of Tennessee's lawsuit accusing the U.S. government of unconstitutionally coercing it into subsidizing the federal refugee resettlement program. Tennessee accused the government of invading its sovereignty by requiring it to provide Medicaid benefits to refugees, or else risk losing nearly \$7 billion of Medicaid funds annually, equal to about 20 percent of its state budget, if it refused. (Stempel, 3/19)

Times Free Press: Tennessee House Approves Bill Seeking Federal OK For Medicaid Work Requirement

The Tennessee House voted Monday night to direct the Haslam administration to seek a waiver of federal Medicaid rules to develop a plan imposing a work requirement on some able-bodied TennCare enrollees. The bill, sponsored by House Speaker Beth Harwell, R-Nashville, and carried by Rep. Dan Howell, R-Georgetown, was approved along party lines 72-23 after a spirited debate and unsuccessful attempts by Democrats to amend it. (Sher, 3/19)

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And in New Hampshire —

The Associated Press: House Holds Hearing On Medicaid Expansion Bill
House lawmakers are beginning their debate over a plan to reauthorize New Hampshire's expanded Medicaid program. The current program has put about 50,000

low-income residents on private insurance plans, but it will expire later this year if lawmakers don't reauthorize it. (3/20)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

12. Teen Suicide Spiked By 70 Percent In Span Of Ten Years. What's Going On?

USA Today examines the unique struggles facing teens in a digital age. In other public health news: where to sit on an airplane to avoid getting sick; disparities in autism diagnoses; gut microbes; disease detectives; and more.

USA Today: Teen Suicide Is Soaring. Do Spotty Mental Health And Addiction Treatment Share Blame?

J.C. Ruf, 16, was a Cincinnati-area pitcher who died by suicide in the laundry room of his house. Tayler Schmid, 17, was an avid pilot and hiker who chose the family garage in upstate New York. Josh Anderson, 17, of Vienna, Va., was a football player who killed himself the day before a school disciplinary hearing. The young men were as different as the areas of the country where they lived. But they shared one thing in common: A despair so deep they thought suicide was the only way out. (O'Donnell and Saker, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Want To Avoid The Flu While Flying? Try A Window Seat
Worried about catching a cold or the flu on an airplane? Get a window seat, and don't leave it until the flight is over. That's what some experts have been saying for years, and it's perhaps the best advice coming out of a new attempt to determine the risks of catching germs on an airplane. (Stobbe, 3/19)

Los Angeles Times: To Avoid Germs On An Airplane, Consider Booking A Window Seat

What you really need to watch out for is a flight attendant with a cough or runny nose. A single one of them can infect 4.6 passengers during a transcontinental flight. A group that dubbed itself the FlyHealthy Research Team came to these conclusions after flying back and forth from Atlanta to the West Coast on 10 flights and paying extremely close attention to the movements in the economy-class portion of the cabin. (Kaplan, 3/19)

NPR: African-American And Latino Children Often Diagnosed With Autism Later Than Their White Peers

Sherry Alvarez says she knew there was something different about her son since he was about 9 months old. Back then Sherry says his pediatrician told her there was nothing to worry about, " 'Boys are a little slower than girls, so let's just wait until his

second birthday.' " We aren't using Sherry's son's name to protect his privacy. By her son's second birthday, Sherry says she was getting desperate. She didn't know why he wasn't talking yet or showing affection like other kids. At 2 1/2, he was referred to Children's Hospital Los Angeles. (Rentz, 3/19)

Stat: Many Common Drugs, Not Just Antibiotics, May Kill Off Gut Microbes

Antibiotics, it's widely known, can wipe out a person's "good" microbes along with the bad — sometimes leading to nasty side effects like diarrhea or serious infections. But new research finds that antibiotics aren't alone in their bacterial slaughter: Nearly 1 in 4 other prescription medications, from antipsychotics to antivirals, kill off gut microbes. That could mean old drugs could have new uses — or have hidden impacts on antibiotic resistance. (Sheridan, 3/19)

Stat: As Towns Lose Their Newspapers, Disease Detectives Are Left To Fly Blind
Epidemiologists rely on all kinds of data to detect the spread of disease, including reports from local and state agencies and social media. But local newspapers are critical to identifying outbreaks and forecasting their trajectories. On the map, [Maia] Majumder saw every county without a local newspaper as a community where health officials and disease researchers could be flying blind. (Branswell, 2/20)

The Associated Press: For Menopause Sex Discomfort, Gel Worked As Well As Hormone

In a study of women with menopause-related sexual discomfort, gels worked as well as prescription hormone tablets at reducing symptoms. The researchers say the results suggest low-cost, over-the-counter moisturizers might be the best option. Most women in the study reported some relief from their most bothersome symptoms — painful intercourse, vaginal dryness or itching — regardless of treatment. Still, not quite half the women experienced what researchers considered a meaningful decline in symptom severity. (3/19)

Kaiser Health News: Adults Skipping Vaccines May Miss Out On Effective New Shingles Shot

Federal officials have recommended a new vaccine that is more effective than an earlier version at protecting older adults against the painful rash called shingles. But persuading many adults to get this and other recommended vaccines continues to be an uphill battle, physicians and vaccine experts say. "I'm healthy, I'll get that when I'm older," is what adult patients often tell Dr. Michael Munger when he brings up an annual flu shot or a tetanus-diphtheria booster or the new shingles vaccine. Sometimes they put him off by questioning a vaccine's effectiveness. (Andrews, 3/20)

The New York Times: Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach Of Racism For Black Boys

Black boys raised in America, even in the wealthiest families and living in some of the most well-to-do neighborhoods, still earn less in adulthood than white boys with similar backgrounds, according to a sweeping new study that traced the lives of millions of children. (Badger, Miller, Pearce and Quealy, 3/19)

The New York Times: When the Death Of A Family Farm Leads To Suicide

Fred Morgan was already deep in debt from rebuilding his milking barn after a fire when milk prices plunged in 2015, setting off an economic drought that is now entering its fourth year — the worst in recent memory for dairy farmers in New York State. Mr. Morgan, 50, saw no way to save the dairy farm in central New York State that he took over as a teenager from his ailing father and ran with his wife, Judy, and their son, Cody. (Kilgannon, 3/19)

California Healthline: The Juul's So Cool, Kids Smoke It In School

The students wait eagerly for their teachers to turn their backs. That's their cue to reach quietly for a small, sleek device they can easily conceal in their palms. It resembles a flash drive, but instead of computer files, this device stores nicotine. They take a hit, sucking on the device as they would a cigarette. Then, "they blow into their backpacks ... or into their sweater when the teacher isn't looking," said Elijah Luna, 16, a sophomore at Vista del Lago High School in Folsom, Calif., about 30 miles east of Sacramento. (Ibarra, 3/19)

STATE WATCH

13. State Highlights: Minnesota To Require Documentation After Open Enrollment; Texas Revises Special Education Plans Without Extra Funds

Media outlets report on news from Minnesota, Texas, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, Arizona, California, Kansas and Florida.

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The Star Tribune: MNSure Tightens Rule On 'Special' Enrollments

People seeking health insurance via MNSure outside the standard open enrollment period will now be required to document their eligibility for "special enrollment" before they can buy a policy. MNSure said the tighter rules should help make sure people don't

wait until they are sick to buy coverage, a practice that drives up costs for others. (Snowbeck, 3/19)

Texas Tribune: In New Plan, Texas Education Agency Vows Special Education Overhaul With Limited Dollars

The TEA released the 42-page draft strategic plan Monday, a couple of months after a 15-month federal investigation concluded Texas had not been providing kids with disabilities the tools and services they needed to learn, likely failing to educate thousands of students and violating federal law. Federal officials found the state was effectively incentivizing school districts to keep their special education numbers low and that many teachers fundamentally misunderstood the legal requirements around educating kids with disabilities. (Swaby, 3/19)

The Associated Press: Johns Hopkins Nurses Eye Unionizing Over Staffing, Benefits
Organizers say nurses at Johns Hopkins Hospital are overworked and underpaid compared with counterparts elsewhere and could form a union. The National Nurses United collective bargaining director for the mid-Atlantic region, Corey Lanham, tells The Baltimore Sun that nurse turnover at the hospital is high because of short staffing and declining benefits. (3/19)

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Columbus Dispatch: Rise In Alzheimer's Cases Slows In Ohio, But Impact Still Daunting

The number of people living with Alzheimer's disease in Ohio is projected to increase at a slower rate than in any other state between now and 2025. ...A 13.6 percent increase — or an additional 30,000 people age 65 and older having Alzheimer's — is still a staggering statistic. And in other measurements, such as the disease's mortality rate and its impact on unpaid family caregivers, Ohio still lags behind much of the United States. (Widman Neese, 3/20)

Chicago Tribune: UIC Hospital To Close Physical Rehab Unit To Make Room For More Private Hospital Beds

University of Illinois Hospital in Chicago plans to create more private patient rooms by discontinuing its physical rehabilitation division, which has seen declining use over the past few years. The hospital, in the Chicago medical district, filed an application with the state's Health Facilities and Services Review Board to convert its 18 physical rehab beds to adult medical-surgical beds, which will allow it to repurpose some shared rooms into private rooms. (Elejalde-Ruiz, 3/19)

Arizona Republic: Governor Doug Ducey Releases Gun Control Plan In Wake Of Parkland

Citing lessons learned from the nation's deadliest school shootings, Gov. Doug Ducey released a plan Monday aimed at preventing a similar mass killings in Arizona. Democrats say the plan doesn't go far enough. It could also face hurdles with some conservative state lawmakers who generally support looser gun laws. (Gardiner and Wingett Sanchez, 3/19)

The Baltimore Sun: Mercy Opens Expanded Primary Care And Pediatric Office In Baltimore

Mercy Medical Center has moved its pediatric and primary care physicians' office to a larger space in hopes of increasing patient access to medical services. Health Centers of Baltimore has also changed its name to Mercy Family Care Physicians and undergone \$4 million in upgrades. The center has moved to a 14,675-square-foot building at the hospital's Tower Building on St. Paul Place. Before that it was located on Calvert Street. (McDaniels, 3/19)

Texas Tribune: Report: Texas Child Abuse And Neglect Deaths Often Tied To Alcohol Or Drugs

The number of Texas children dying from abuse and neglect decreased by 22.5 percent in fiscal year 2017, but half of the deaths occurred under caregivers using drugs or alcohol, according to a Texas Department of Family and Protective Services report released earlier this month. A similar report last year also found that half of the 222 children who died were being watched by a parent or caregiver under the influence of drugs or alcohol. (Evans, 3/20)

Sacramento Bee: Increase In Influenza B Cases And Flu Outbreaks In Calif.

A surge in influenza B cases is providing a lesson to California residents that they cannot let down their guard just because influenza A activity declines. The H3N2 strain of influenza A grabbed headlines early in the flu season, as Californians learned anew of its deadly force, but now influenza B is causing a growing number of flu outbreaks in the Golden State. (Anderson, 3/19)

Kansas City Star: Johnson County Now Has Eight Measles Cases

The number of measles patients continues to grow, with the reported cases in Johnson County now up to eight. The list of places where people may have been exposed has also grown by one location. (Marso and Horsley, 3/19)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Akron City Council To Consider Raising Age To Buy Tobacco Products, Paraphernalia To 21

Teens looking to buy cigarettes in Akron could soon leave empty-handed. Legislation

introduced to Akron City Council by Mayor Dan Horrigan and At-large Councilwoman Linda Omobien would raise the legal age in Akron to purchase tobacco products and tobacco paraphernalia from 18 to 21 years old. (Conn, 3/19)

Miami Herald: Salmonella Causes Recall Of Coconut Products In 29 States
About three hours after a Monday FDA e-mail announcing the recall of International Harvest's Go Smiles organic raw coconut in both bulk and bagged form, the recall of Natural Grocers' store brand Coconut Smiles Organic posted to the FDA site. All Coconut Smiles Organic 10-ounce bags packed before Friday should be tossed or returned for full refund. (Neal, 3/19)

The Baltimore Sun: More Medical Marijuana Dispensaries Open In Maryland
Just over three months since the first few medical marijuana dispensaries opened their doors amid a shortage of products and some technical difficulties, more than 30 cannabis outlets have opened in Maryland. The 34 dispensaries are maintaining regular hours and are located in all corners of the state, according to a review by The Sun. They are in a dozen counties and Baltimore City, with five more dispensaries licensed but not yet open in five jurisdictions. (Meredith, 3/20)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

14. Viewpoints: Reform Obamacare? GOP Is More Focused On Elections; Listen, Doctors: Opioid Crisis Cries Out For Trimming Prescriptions

Editorial pages focus on these health topics and others.

The Wall Street Journal: Life Support For ObamaCare
We said Republicans would pay dearly for failing to replace ObamaCare, and the bill is already coming due this week in a political extortion fight with health insurers. The GOP may pad the omnibus spending bill with enough cash to preserve the law through the 2020 election. (3/19)

USA Today: Doctors Need To Help Cure Opioid Crisis
In New Hampshire on Monday, President Trump announced his latest plan to deal with the epidemic. His call for emulating countries that execute drug dealers garnered most of the headlines. And the plan, like his declaration last fall that the crisis was a public health emergency, lacked sufficient detail and funding. But at least on the prevention side of the problem, the president was on to something when he said that "the best way to beat the drug crisis is to keep people from getting hooked on drugs to begin with."

He set a goal of reducing opioid prescriptions by one-third over the next three years, and ensuring that federally reimbursed prescriptions follow best practices. Physicians, many of them well-meaning, helped fuel the crisis by handing out opioids like candy. Now they can be of enormous help in bringing it under control by preventing the creation of new addicts. (3/19)

NH Times Union: Trump's Plan: A Blueprint We Can Build On

When President Trump chose to unveil his plan for dealing with the ongoing opioid crisis, what better place to do so than the “drug-infested den” of New Hampshire? We weren’t offended by Trump’s harsh words, because, well, he had a point. We’ve been hit as hard as anywhere in the country by the deadly scourge of fentanyl, and years of good faith efforts by local, state, and federal officials are just now preventing the number of overdose deaths from rising. (3/19)

USA Today: AMA: We're Helping To End Overdose Epidemic

Physicians today are providing the leadership to help end the nation’s opioid-related overdose and death epidemic. As medical professionals, we go where the evidence leads us. (Patrice A. Harris, 3/19)

Los Angeles Times: If It Wasn't Related To Abortion, California's FACT Act Would Easily Be Upheld By The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments Tuesday in the case National Institute of Family and Life Advocates vs. Becerra, which challenges a California law requiring reproductive healthcare facilities to inform women of state programs that might assist them. It should be an easy issue to decide — in favor of the California law — but it is not because it arises in the context of abortion. (3/20)

The New York Times: The Abortion Case That’s Really About the First Amendment

The law’s defenders say the notices combat incomplete or misleading information provided by the clinics. “In certain ways, the case has played out just as one might have expected: The Conference of Catholic Bishops has lined up on one side and Planned Parenthood on the other. Most people’s opinions on abortion rights and their opinions on the correct outcome in this case are probably pretty closely linked. (Robert McNamara and Paul Sherman, 3/20)

Kansas City Star: Missouri Women Deserve Facts, Not Lies, About Health Care

This week, the Supreme Court will be hearing oral arguments in an important case, National Institute of Family and Life Advocates v Becerra. I’ll be paying close attention — and so should you. This case centers on the notion that patients should receive full,

accurate, and comprehensive information about their health care. (Colleen McNicholas, 3/19)

Louisville Courier-Journal: Kentucky Abortion Battle Rages On But Providers Deserve Honor

Rather than judging those whose life circumstances lead them to get abortions, we would do better to recognize that we are not in their shoes. How can any of us know the individual, particular circumstances of another person's life – especially a person we don't even know? A person we will never know. How simple and manifestly unjust it is, instead, for those who will not have to live with the consequences to impose one-size-fits-all rules on the women who will. ...Which brings us to the Kentucky General Assembly. I am disappointed to say that trust and compassion for women are not the perspective of many in that body. Although Republican legislative leaders said at the beginning of the year that they did not expect abortion to be a key issue in the 2018 legislative session, we have seen no fewer than seven anti-abortion bills filed. (Kim Greene, 3/16)

WBUR: Policies To Help Americans Be Happier? Start With More Public Spending For Mental Health

The U.S. ranks 18th among the world's countries, with an average life satisfaction of around 6.88 on a scale of 10. While that may be relatively near the top, America's happiness figures have actually declined every year since the reports began in 2012, and this year's are the lowest yet. The question, then, is whether the government has a role to play in improving the happiness of its citizens. (George Ward, 3/19)

Bloomberg: Arming Teachers Is A Terrible Idea, President Trump

It's hard to know if President Donald Trump's plan to arm teachers is a real proposal or just noise to obscure his hapless response to the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. The idea of "firearms training for school personnel" is on a White House list of measures that patently falls short of being an actual policy to prevent shootings at schools or anywhere else. As if to confirm its pointlessness, the plan even includes that classic Washington side-step -- a blue-ribbon commission to look into it all. One can only hope that the idea does indeed come to nothing. (3/19)

USA Today: It's Teen Mental Health Week. Celebrate.

It's Teen Health Week. Seem like there's not a lot to celebrate? Think again.

Sure, suicide rates are soaring, the opioid epidemic is spreading from rural to suburban and urban areas and school shootings occurred at a rate of about one a week before the Parkland, Fla. shooting last month. Teens' stress levels are sky high. I have a 17 year old daughter who is awaiting word from all of the seemingly countless colleges she applied to. We live in Fairfax County, Va., one of the most affluent in the country

and where pressure to excel has been met with several teen suicides in the past few years. (Jayne O'Donnell, 3/19)

The Washington Post: Virginia's Medicaid Impasse, Courtesy Of The GOP
Virginia's state Senate Republicans have dug in their heels once again to oppose a Medicaid expansion that would extend health insurance to roughly 400,000 citizens. Their stance is impervious to public opinion, which favors expansion by large margins; at odds with many of the GOP members in the House of Delegates and in some other Republican-controlled legislatures nationwide, who have switched sides in the debate; and heedless of hard-working Virginians for whom there is no health-care alternative save the emergency room. (3/19)

RealClear Health: Rural America's Health Care Crisis
Rural communities are facing a crisis that, while quiet, is threatening millions. As hospitals in these communities close and services are cut, many Americans are losing access to quality health care. Since 2010, more than 80 rural hospitals have shuttered. The National Rural Health Association, a non-profit that advocates for rural issues, estimates that there are as many as 700 more rural hospitals at risk of closing in the next 10 years. Just last month, the county commissioners of Decatur County, Tennessee, voted to close the county hospital. And even in cases where these hospitals stay afloat, critical services end up being axed. Often, obstetric services are atop the chopping block: between 2004 to 2014, 9 percent of all rural counties lost access to hospital obstetric services. (Suzanne Harrison and Kim Templeton, 3/15)

The Baltimore Sun: America's poor families need food stamps to survive
President Donald Trump's fiscal year 2019 budget request has me worried for the future health and well-being of our nation's low-income communities. Under this proposal, there is to be an immediate \$17 billion reduction to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, followed by a \$213.5 billion reduction over the next 10 years. (Caroline Meehan, 3/19)

Stat: Lawmakers Must Act On Reducing Antibiotic Use In Food Animals
Congress should include language in the Animal Drug User Fee Act reauthorization that limits the use of medically important antibiotics to 21 days. By doing that, we'll give resistant bacteria less of a chance to thrive and spread. Large-scale production of food animals without misusing antibiotics is not only feasible, it's necessary to maintain the effectiveness of these lifesaving medicines for humans and animals. (Matthew Wellington, 3/19)

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From: Capitol Letter

Sent: Friday, June 8, 2018 3:15 AM

To: Alexander, Steven

Subject: Payday loan restrictions among long list of measures adopted by House

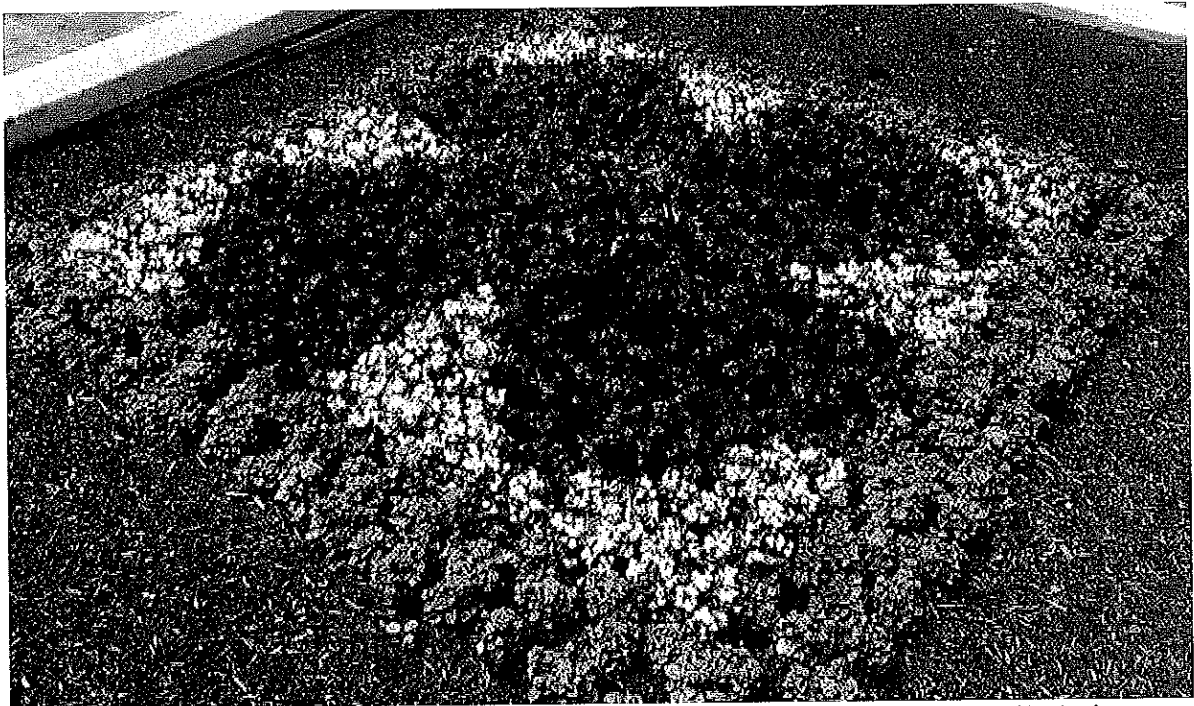
Friday, June 8, 2018

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Capitol Letter

Laura Hancock and Jeremy Pelzer



A garden bed on the north side of the Ohio Statehouse showcases a poppy quilt design to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. (Laura Hancock/cleveland.com)

Rotunda Rumblings

The long and winding road: Meeting for a voting session for the first time in about eight weeks, the House adopted a long list of bills, including a measure that would restrict payday lenders' rates to 28 percent, down from an average 591 percent, writes cleveland.com's Laura Hancock. House Bill 123 now heads to the Senate, where there are plenty of opportunities for the bill to be altered or to sink.

Payday lender or loan shark? Is there really a difference between those two terms. Cleveland.com's Eric Heisig has a piece exploring the question, along with some interesting history on the short-term loan.

One step for man, one giant leap for dogkind... Hancock reports that dogs are one step closer to lawfully accompanying their people to dinner, as long as they're chilling in outdoor restaurant patios. The Ohio Senate passed a measure to allow restaurant owners to choose if they want pups on patios.

Clearing the backlog: In all, the Ohio House on Thursday passed 17 bills, including measures to prohibit hospitals from forcing nurses to work overtime (House Bill 456) and allow payouts to Ohioans who are wrongfully imprisoned because of withheld evidence (House Bill 411). House members also concurred with the Senate's changes to an additional 11 bills. Among them: House Bill 225, which aims to help plug 700 orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells in the state.

Leneghan to challenge OH-12 results: Republican Melanie Leneghan is drawing up paperwork to contest the results of last month's 12th Congressional District primary, claiming Muskingum County elections officials violated Ohio law by opening ballot containers before starting a recount. But an Ohio secretary of state's office spokesman told cleveland.com's Jeremy Pelzer that "there doesn't appear to be anything improper going on."

More cones of shame could come to Ohio: The House adopted a bill to

give veterinarians continuing education credit for offering free spay and neuter services. House Bill 433 heads to the Senate.

Pay raises ahead: The House also undertook a number of bills that had been adopted by the Senate and contained “emergency clauses,” or time-sensitive provisions. One of those bills was House Bill 292. Two weeks ago the Senate amended the bill to give 11,000 exempt state employees who are not members of unions a 2.75 pay raise to match the raise Ohio’s largest public employees union had negotiated in its collective bargaining agreement. The raise will go into effect, assuming Gov. John Kasich signs it, during the pay period that includes July 1.

Commercial break is over: A month after the barrage of 12th Congressional District primary television ads stopped, a new wave of special-election ads is about to hit the Central Ohio airwaves. The Congressional Leadership Fund, a super PAC with ties to House GOP leadership, has purchased \$165,000 worth of broadcast TV ads between Friday and next Tuesday, according to Medium Buying, a political ad tracker.

Chairman Ryan: House Speaker Ryan Smith used to chair the influential House Finance Committee and has now given that job to Rep. Scott Ryan, a Columbus-area Republican.

A little work, a little play? Since the Ohio House went without a session for roughly eight weeks as a battle over the next speaker dragged on, new Speaker Ryan Smith has a full schedule planned for the chamber for the rest of the month – a time when lawmakers are usually on recess. The House will meet on June 20 and June 27, according to an updated House schedule. Smith said there will be a light committee meeting schedule, if any meet at all.

PEP in their step: PEP Connections, a Cuyahoga County behavioral health program for at-risk youth, will stay afloat for at least another year thanks to an appropriation added to a medical anti-discrimination bill, if Kasich signs off, cleveland.com's Jackie Borchardt reports. The program faced a funding cliff July 1 because the state was ending a decades-long Medicaid waiver covering some of its costs to coincide with moving

Medicaid behavioral health care payments to the managed care model. House Bill 332 gives the program \$2.5 million to use this year, and lawmakers hope the program can be replicated across the state.

Getting their day in (administrative) court: Hearings resume this month for medical marijuana cultivation applicants who appealed the state's licensing decisions, Borchardt reports. The Department of Commerce put the hearings on hold in February after it discovered a scoring error and hired Ernst & Young to make sure scores for all 185 applicants checked out. The agency released Ernst & Young's initial report validating those scores on Thursday.

Your brain on drugs: The White House has a new anti-opioid ad campaign designed for shock value. It features the true stories of young people, including one from Ohio, who go to desperate lengths – including breaking their own bones – to get the addictive painkillers. Cleveland.com's Sabrina Eaton has the details and video of the commercials.

Get out of my way: U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce has introduced a bipartisan bill that would keep the federal government from interfering with states like Ohio that have legalized marijuana, Eaton reports. "We should trust the people of the states, like Ohio, who have voted to implement responsible common-sense regulations and requirements for the use, production, and sale of cannabis," said a statement from Joyce. "If the people of these states have decided to provide help for those veterans and others suffering from pain and other health issues, we should allow them access without government interference."

Uncle Joe supporting Sherrod: Former Vice President Joe Biden will headline a fundraiser for U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown in Cleveland later this month, reports cleveland.com's Andrew Tobias. The appearance suggests Biden, a possible 2020 contender, is keeping his contacts fresh with Ohio Democrats. Brown is running for re-election against Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci.

Kasich in Foreign Affairs: Ohio Gov. John Kasich laid out his case for a more open and globally engaged America in a lengthy piece that published

in Foreign Affairs on Thursday. The essay, which touches on things like international trade, immigration and diplomacy with China, is the latest expression of Kasich's ongoing "Two Paths" mantra rebuking President Donald Trump.

Luck of the draw: Year-over-year revenues at gambling facilities in the Cleveland area in May were down 5 percent, while elsewhere across Ohio they were flat, writes cleveland.com's Rich Exner. An executive for JACK Casino in Cleveland said the drop is "100 percent attributable" to slightly luckier outcomes for players at the casino's table games.

Federal judges nominated: President Donald Trump on Thursday nominated two young attorneys to federal judicial spots on the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, Heisig writes. They are Eric Murphy, 39, and Chad Readler, 45. Murphy is the state solicitor under Attorney General Mike DeWine. Readler is the principal deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's civil division, and previously was chairman of the board for the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Sen. Sherrod Brown said he would not support the nominees because he's not convinced they will support the rights of Ohioans, Heisig reports.

On the outs: "Ohio House Democrats took the highly unusual step Thursday of voting to kick Rep. Bernadine Kennedy Kent out of their caucus — and one or more of them are considering taking legal action against her," writes Jim Siegel of the Columbus Dispatch. Kennedy Kent, of Columbus, drew the ire of her colleagues when she wrote a letter to city officials using the signatures of members of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus without their permission, Siegel reports.

Full Disclosure

Five things we learned from Springfield Republican Rep. Kyle Koehler's April 9 financial disclosure statement.

1. Koehler's first name actually is Jerome.
2. He reported earning \$100,000 or more in 2017 as vice president of

design at K.K. Tool Co. He earned \$65,476 last year as a representative, according to the Ohio Treasurer's office.

3. He received \$113.76 in gifts or meals from lobbyists last year, including a \$51.74 unspecified gift from the Ohio Quarter Horse Association and attended Alvis Inc.'s 180 Degree Impact Luncheon, worth \$50.

4. The Ohio House Republican Organizational Committee paid \$2,371.20 for Koehler's travel.

5. At some point in 2017 he owed at least \$1,000 to Ally on a car loan, MBNA on a car loan and an MBNA credit card.

Birthdays

Amanda Wurst, vice president of communications, Remington Road Group

Straight From The Source

"The problem with this approach is, I think you're seeing an escalation that may result in both higher tariffs -- which is bad for our exporters, our farmers, our service providers, our factory workers -- but also bad for our consumers because you're going to see tariffs or taxes going up on both sides. 0

- Republican Ohio U.S. Sen. Rob Portman on CNN discussing the White House's approach in negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada at a time when President Donald Trump has announced tariffs.

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Morning Briefing

Wednesday, March 08, 2017

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From Kaiser Health News:

KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

- 1. Five Ways The GOP Health Bill Would Reverse Course From The ACA**

From Medicaid funding to paying for over-the-counter drugs, the legislation offered by House Republicans offers a far different pathway to coverage than Obamacare. (Julie Rovner, 3/8)

2. LA County Health Chief Wants To 'Catch' People Dropped From Coverage

Mitch Katz, director of the L.A. County Health Agency, says California must find ways to cover state residents who might lose their health coverage if Obamacare is repealed. (Emily Bazar, 3/8)

3. Dentists Work To Ease Patients' Pain With Fewer Opioids

Dentistry is at a crossroads and many in the field are reassessing their narcotics prescribing habits. (Elana Gordon, WHYY, 3/8)

4. Los Angeles County Scores An E-Success In Managing Specialist Care

An electronic consulting and referral system adopted by the county's safety net public health system in 2012 has reduced waiting times for appointments with specialists and eliminated the need for such appointments in a significant number of cases, according to a new study in the journal Health Affairs. (Anna Gorman, 3/8)

5. Political Cartoon: 'Growth Experience?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Growth Experience?'" by Gary Varvel, The Indianapolis Star.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

AHCA leaves
Many millions uninsured
Gridlock looks good now.

- Jeff Levin-Scherz

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

HEALTH LAW

6. Conservatives Balk At GOP Plan: 'This Is Not The Obamacare Repeal Bill We've Been Waiting For'

The right wing of the party immediately panned the bill, calling it Obamacare-lite.

The New York Times: G.O.P. Health Bill Faces Revolt From Conservative Forces
After seven years of waiting longingly to annul President Barack Obama's signature health care law, Republican leaders on Tuesday faced a sudden revolt from the right that threatened their proposal to remake the American health care system. The much-anticipated House plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act also drew skepticism from some of the party's more moderate members, whose constituents have benefited from expanded coverage in recent years. (Steinhauer, 3/7)

The Washington Post: The Three GOP Factions That Could Doom Republicans' Obamacare Replacement Bill

As they roll out their Obamacare replacement plan, Republicans are quickly finding out what Democrats learned eight years ago: Even if you win control of Congress and the White House, there are still plenty of obstacles to passing laws that, in principle, your whole party agrees with. Several factions within the Republican Party don't like some key details about this new health-care plan. In fact, there's enough opposition that these Republicans could derail the bill as it stands. It's something President Trump appeared to acknowledge when he offered up in a tweet Tuesday morning the opportunity for "review and negotiation." (Phillips, 3/7)

The Washington Post: House GOP Proposal To Replace Obamacare Sparks Broad Backlash

The most imminent and serious threat to the plan crafted by House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) was the growing backlash from conservative lawmakers and powerful outside groups who argue that the draft is nothing more than "Obamacare Lite," a disparaging reference to the former president's signature 2010 domestic achievement.

The lawmakers do not represent a majority of Republicans in either chamber of Congress, but there could be enough of them to scuttle any health-care bill they oppose — and several said Tuesday they intend to use that leverage to force major changes to the measures. (DeBonis, Costa and Weigel, 3/7)

The Associated Press: Conservative Backlash Threatens To Sink New GOP Health Bill
But major obstacles loomed as key Republican lawmakers announced their opposition, and one conservative group after another torched the plan. The Club for Growth, Heritage Action for America, Americans for Prosperity and Tea Party Patriots variously derided the new bill as Obamacare Lite, Obamacare 2.0 and even RyanCare, in a dig at House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin. (Werner and Fram, 3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: GOP's Health Plan Draws Skepticism On Capitol Hill
Opposition from conservative lawmakers and activist groups could derail the party's highly prized bid to replace the Affordable Care Act. That could challenge Mr. Trump to decide whether to enter the fray explicitly and become the negotiator-in-chief he had styled himself as on the campaign trail, and if so, when to deploy himself in that capacity. White House officials said they were unfazed by the blowback, and that negotiations could resolve lingering objections from lawmakers they assume are ultimately unwilling to torpedo their chance to repeal the law. (Radnofsky, Peterson and Huges, 3/7)

Politico: Ryan Disappoints His Friends With Obamacare Replacement Bill
House Speaker Paul Ryan has long been the darling of conservative policy wonks. But on one of the biggest days of his political career, when House Republicans released their much-anticipated Obamacare replacement, many of Ryan's closest friends in conservative intelligentsia expressed disappointment — if not outright dismay — with the legislation bearing the speaker's imprimatur. (Johnson, 3/8)

The Wall Street Journal: GOP Health Plan Sparks Debate Over Obamacare Comparisons
House Republicans are facing swift criticism that their sweeping plan to repeal and overhaul large swaths of the Affordable Care Act is too similar to the law it would replace. "Obamacare 2.0," tweeted Republican Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan. "This is Obamacare-lite," said Jason Pye, public policy and legislative affairs director at FreedomWorks, a conservative group associated with the tea party movement. (Armour, 3/8)

CQ Roll Call: Conservatives Want To Know Budget Impact Of Obamacare Repeal
Conservative lawmakers worried about balancing the budget pushed back Tuesday against plans to mark up the health care repeal and replace reconciliation bill before the

Congressional Budget Office can compute a score of the costs. "We don't know how many people would use this new tax credit, we don't know how much it will cost, and we don't know if this bill will make health care more affordable for Americans," D Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, said in a statement. "This is exactly the type of back-room dealing and rushed process that we criticized Democrats for, and it is not what we promised the American people." (Shutt and Mejdric, 3/7)

Los Angeles Times: Obamacare Overhaul Faces Resistance In Congress From Right And Left

"This is not the Obamacare repeal bill we've been waiting for," said Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), who is leading the GOP opposition with Paul and the House Freedom Caucus. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) has also raised objections. "We promised the American people we would drain the swamp and end business as usual in Washington. This bill does not do that," Lee said. "This is exactly the type of backroom dealing and rushed process that we criticized Democrats for, and it is not what we promised the American people." (Mascaro, 3/7)

CQ Roll Call: GOP Leaders Facing Barrage Of Criticism On Health Care Proposal But Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden of Oregon and Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady of Texas on Tuesday pushed back against critics. They portrayed the legislation as a stark choice between either fulfilling the seven-year Republican pledge to repeal the law or not. "This is Obamacare gone. This is the first and most important step to giving relief to Americans from this terrible law," Brady said. "As Republicans, we have a choice. We can act now or we can keep fiddling around and squander this opportunity to repeal Obamacare." (Williams, 3/7)

The Hill: Right Revolts On ObamaCare Bill

"You have to get rid of ObamaCare completely," said conservative Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) at a press conference with other Freedom Caucus members, along with Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah), who also object to the bill. Paul called the plan "dead on arrival." (Sullivan, 3/7)

San Francisco Chronicle: GOP Obamacare Replacement Plan Already In Jeopardy Given the swift opposition to the bill and a glaring lack of a political groundswell in its support, the plan's future remains an open question. If the legislation fails to gain traction, the struggle over fulfilling the bedrock promise of President Trump and congressional Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act could consume the Republican agenda for weeks if not months, delaying action on tax reform and grinding the new administration's legislative agenda to a halt. (Lochhead, 3/7)

Morning Consult: Conservatives Suggest They Won't Fall In Line On ACA Overhaul
Less than 24 hours after legislation was introduced, the plan put forth by House leadership won the approval of the White House, but sparked the ire of conservative organizations, health wonks and lawmakers. Still, GOP leaders are pressing forward with markups scheduled for Wednesday in two House committees, despite not having scoring from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which will calculate the bill's costs and effects on health coverage. (McIntire and Reid, 3/7)

McClatchy: Obamacare Replacement Bill Appears Dead On Arrival
The Republican leadership's plan was to fast-track their just-released proposal to repeal Obamacare. Republican leaders want to vote on it in the House of Representatives, send it to the Senate and put it on President Donald Trump's desk within months. It could be their own party that stops it from happening. (Daugherty and Harrell, 3/7)

WBUR: GOP Plan Cuts Parts Of Affordable Care Act, But Not Enough For Some Republicans
Congressional Republicans have put forth a new bill meant to replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. The new law would encourage people to buy health insurance by using tax credits, while also repealing the individual mandate penalty. (Hobson, 3/7)

The Hill: Conservatives To Introduce Their Own ObamaCare Plan
Conservative lawmakers said Tuesday they will introduce their own ObamaCare repeal plan, objecting to House GOP leadership's proposal. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) and Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said they will introduce a clean bill to repeal ObamaCare, as Congress did in 2015. The conservatives argue that they should vote on repeal as a separate measure from replacement, and then debate how to replace ObamaCare. (Sullivan, 3/7)

WBUR: GOP Leaders Begin To Pitch Health Bill, Facing Skeptics In Both Parties
With two House committees set to take up the Republican replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act on Wednesday, party leaders have begun trying to sell the proposal to the American public. Leading the effort is President Trump, who met with Republican House leaders at the White House, saying he is "proud to support the replacement plan released by the House of Representatives." (Naylor, 3/7)

CQ Roll Call: House Conservatives Huddle With Mulvaney On Obamacare Repeal
Members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus came out of a meeting with Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney Tuesday night convinced the White House is open to changes in a health care repeal plan. They also said the

former South Carolina congressman did not change the minds of those in the group who are opposed to the repeal plan endorsed by House Republican leaders. Leaders of the group have criticized refundable tax credits in the plan as a new entitlement. (Krawzak, 3/8)

The Washington Post: How Obamacare Made The GOP Embrace 'Government Health Care'

Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) made a comment Tuesday morning about health care coverage that he seemed to quickly regret. "Americans have choices, and they've got to make a choice," Chaffetz said on CNN. "And so maybe rather than getting that new iPhone that they just love and they want to go spend hundreds of dollars on that, maybe they should invest in their own health care." (Blake, 3/7)

7. GOP Governors, Concerned About Medicaid, Join Chorus Of Critics On House Plan

House leaders overlooked advice from the governors on health policy, especially Medicaid, says Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, while Ohio Gov. John Kasich urges more bipartisan cooperation to find a new health plan. News outlets also examine how the plan will affect Medicaid.

The Associated Press: Republican Governors Complain About GOP Health Care Plan
Republican governors complain that a GOP proposal to replace former President Barack Obama's health care law would force millions of lower-income earners off insurance rolls or stick states with the cost of keeping them covered. Governors, especially those from political battleground states, were generally cool to the bill put forth in the Republican-controlled U.S. House. Some signaled that they would continue working on their own legislation to compete with the measure introduced Monday. (Beaumont and Noon, 3/7)

Cincinnati Enquirer: John Kasich Opposes GOP Obamacare Repeal Bill Because Of Medicaid Phaseout

Ohio Gov. John Kasich on Tuesday became the latest GOP leader to oppose his party's bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to repeal and replace Obamacare. In theory, Kasich wants to repeal former President Barack Obama's health care law. But he said Tuesday he doesn't like the House Republicans' alternative plan. (Thompson, 3/7)

Modern Healthcare: ACA Repeal Bill Would Cap Medicaid Payments Below Actual Costs

The liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that the House bill would

shift \$370 billion in Medicaid costs from the federal government to states over a decade. Of that total, \$253 billion would result from states losing the higher federal contribution for Medicaid expansion enrollees, since enrollment in the enhanced-funding program would be frozen in 2020. The shift to per-capita caps would cut federal Medicaid payments to the states by an additional \$116 billion, because the per-capita growth rate based on M-CPI would lag behind actual Medicaid costs, said Edwin Park, vice president for health policy at CBPP. (Meyer, 3/7)

McClatchy: GOP's Obamacare Repeal Plan Caps Medicaid Funding At States' Peril
The state and federally funded health plan for the poor and those with disabilities has repeatedly expanded its coverage and services to accommodate those struggling with HIV and AIDS, the opioid epidemic, high infant mortality rates, Zika and other public health scourges. But 70 percent of Medicaid's spending growth is due to increased enrollment. In their new legislation to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, congressional Republicans would slash federal Medicaid spending by capping it at a predetermined amount per beneficiary beginning in 2019. (Pugh, 3/7)

Governing: The GOP Wants to Give States More Medicaid Power. This Is What They May Do With It.

[D]uring Trump's first address to Congress on Tuesday, he pledged to give states more flexibility with Medicaid when he repeals and replaces Obamacare. This means that red states may finally be able to follow through with their goals that the Obama administration rejected or made more difficult to achieve. In addition, blue states may also use the added authority to enact more left-leaning policies without having to get federal approval. ... So here's a look at what to expect if that promise becomes a reality. (Quinn, 3/6)

Salem (Ore.) Register-Guard: Oregon's Expanded Medicaid Coverage To Remain Intact — For Now — Under Congressional Republican Plan

At least in the short term, a new health care bill from U.S. House Republicans contains some good news for the 375,000 Oregonians and 40,000 Lane County residents who became eligible and signed up for Medicaid health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. Amid fears that a repeal of Obamacare would mean an immediate or rapid rollback of its expanded eligibility for Medicaid, the Republicans' bill would, in fact, preserve coverage for those people, unless they no longer needed the help, until 2020. (Hubbard, 3/8)

Miami Herald: Medicaid In Florida Will Be Hit Hard By Obamacare Repeal Bill

Florida stands to lose more than it gains under the bill unveiled this week by House Republicans to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act — especially when it comes to the 4.3 million state residents who rely on Medicaid, advocacy groups reviewing the

new legislation said Tuesday. The House bill, called the American Health Care Act, calls for, among other things, a spending limit — known as “per capita caps” — for each person enrolled in Medicaid beginning in 2019, with annual adjustments for medical inflation. Any amount spent above the cap would be at the state’s expense. (Chang and Pugh, 3/7)

Fairbanks (Alaska) News-Miner: Murkowski: ACA Replacement Must Protect Medicaid Recipients

Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and three other Republican senators warned Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell this week that they will not support a replacement of the Affordable Care Act if it does not protect people who gained insurance coverage under the law’s Medicaid expansion provision. ... Murkowski, in previously unpublished comments from a Feb. 4 interview with the News-Miner, noted Medicaid expansion has been positive for Alaska. She made the comment while explaining the status of the health care debate in the House and the Senate. “Medicaid is something, obviously; you have those states that have moved forward with expansion and we’ve clearly seen the benefit of that here,” she said. (Boyce, 3/8)

8. Trump Vows To Do Everything In Power To Get Replace Plan Over Finish Line

The president met with a group of 20 House GOP whips on Tuesday to reassure them he supports their efforts to get the American Health Care Act passed. “He basically said whatever we need him to do ... he’ll do that, because it’s really, as Mike Pence said, is a binary choice: you vote keep Obamacare or you vote to repeal it,” said Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Fla.

Politico: Trump Moves To Assure Conservatives On Obamacare Replacement Plan
President Donald Trump is moving to quiet conservative opposition to the House GOP Obamacare replacement, drawing on his newfound bully pulpit to pressure but also coax rebellious lawmakers. Trump on Tuesday night turned his massive Twitter following on one of the most vocal opponents of the repeal bill: conservative firebrand Sen. Rand Paul. The Kentucky Republican had blasted Speaker Paul Ryan’s Obamacare alternative as Obamacare-lite. (Bade and Cheney, 3/7)

The Hill: Trump: Rand Paul Will 'Come Along' On GOP Healthcare Plan
President Trump on Tuesday evening expressed confidence that Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) would “come along” with the House GOP plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare. “I feel sure that my friend @RandPaul will come along with the new and great health

care program because he knows Obamacare is a disaster!" Trump tweeted.
(Savransky, 3/7)

Los Angeles Times: Trump Said He Fully Supports The New GOP Health Plan — And House Republicans Plan To Hold Him To It
President Trump said Tuesday that he was "proud" to support House Republicans' plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, asserting that his party was committed to seeing the plan through. "Obamacare is collapsing," Trump said in remarks at the White House to Republican lawmakers responsible for building support for the plan in Congress. "It's in bad shape, and we're going to take action. There's going to be no slowing down, there's going to be no waiting and no more excuses by anybody."
(Memoli, 3/7)

The Hill: Trump Begins Healthcare Push: 'Let's Get It Done'
[Trump] urged lawmakers to act "quickly" on the legislation, telling them he was elected "based on the fact [of] repeal and replace ObamaCare, and many of you people are in the same boat." (Fabian, 3/7)

The Associated Press: Trump's Promises Vs. The Republican Plan On Health Care
President Donald Trump said he was "proud to support" House Republicans' proposal for replacing the Affordable Care Act, though he noted that he considered it the first phase of his planned health care overhaul and the beginning of a "negotiation." It's not clear exactly how the White House would like to change the bill. Trump has never put forward a detailed health care proposal. Still, he has made plenty of promises on how he will improve the health care system. (Thomas and Lucey, 3/7)

The Hill: Does GOP's Health Plan Keep Trump's Promises?
As the GOP nominee, Trump made opposition to the healthcare law a major portion of his presidential campaign, at times making lofty claims about what the future of care would look like in his administration. ... Here are five of Trump's most important campaign promises on healthcare and how they are being addressed — or aren't — in the new legislative framework. (Kamisar, 3/8)

9. Despite Rising Dissent, Speaker Ryan Guarantees 'We Will Have 218 Votes' To Push Through Bill

The speaker's optimism belies growing complaints from conservatives and moderates in his party.

The Hill: Ryan Guarantees Health Bill Will Pass The House
Facing the start of a conservative revolt over the GOP healthcare plan, Speaker Paul

Ryan (R-Wis.) vowed Tuesday that the ObamaCare replacement bill would pass the House. "We will have 218 votes," Ryan told reporters at a Tuesday-evening news conference that capped an extraordinary day, which saw the GOP break into open warfare over the health proposal. (Wong, 3/7)

The Washington Post: Whip Count: Here's Where Skeptical Republicans Stand On The GOP's Obamacare Replacement

The magic number in the House of Representatives is 218, and in the Senate 50. Republicans conceivably have enough lawmakers to get to those majorities, but not by much. Assuming no Democrats support the bill, Republicans can lose only 21 votes in the House and just two in the Senate. (Phillips, 3/7)

The Hill: GOP Senator: ObamaCare Repeal Bill May Not Have Votes To Pass
Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), a member of House leadership, said Tuesday the GOP's plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare as it stands may not be able to get the support needed to pass the Senate. "What I don't like is, it may not be a plan that gets a majority votes and let's us move on. Because, we can't stay where we are with the plan we've got now," Blunt said on KMBZ, as first reported by CNN. Blunt, a former vote counter, said the final plan would need to be negotiated. (Hellmann, 3/7)

The Hill: Healthcare Bill Faces Steep Climb In Senate
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has only three weeks to unify conservatives and moderates in his conference behind an ObamaCare repeal and replacement bill. The American Health Care Act, which Vice President Pence on Tuesday declared "the framework for reform," will move first in the House, but it faces perhaps an even steeper climb in the Senate. (Bolton, 3/7)

10. GOP Sets Aggressive Timeline Despite History Of Lambasting Democrats For Rushing Law

If all goes according to plan, the House will vote within a few weeks and the Senate will take up the legislation before its spring recess begins on April 7.

The New York Times: Obamacare Took Months To Craft; Repeal May Be Much Swifter
In June 2009, House Democratic leaders unveiled the first draft of legislation that would ultimately become the Affordable Care Act. A month later, three House committees began formally drafting the bill ahead of a House vote that came well into the fall, after the summer heat had dissipated and the leaves had begun to change. On Wednesday, the House Ways and Means Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committee will

formally mark up legislation to repeal and replace the act — less than 48 hours after Republicans unveiled the bill to the public. (Pear, 3/7)

The Associated Press: How To Transform GOP Health Care Plan Into Law
After more than 60 votes and seven years of promises, Republicans offered their long-awaited plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. Now, the real work begins. Republicans must navigate a complicated path to turn their 123-page proposal from legislation to law. A look at the process and the politics. (Lerer, 3/8)

11. Democrats Plan To Go Down Swinging

Although they don't have the votes to keep the Republicans' health plan from moving out of committee, they will not make it easy.

Roll Call: Democrats Won't Make Obamacare Repeal Debates Easy
House Democrats are gearing up to make Wednesday's dueling health care committee debates as painful as possible for Republicans. The minority members on two committees, Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce, will march to the concurrent markups of the new Republican plan to overhaul the 2010 health care law armed with dozens of politically tough amendments, staffers and outside groups told CQ Roll Call. (Mershon and Williams, 3/7)

The Hill: Kaine Attacks 'TrumpCare' On Twitter
Former Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Kaine (D-Va.) slammed what he called "CTrumpcare" on Tuesday, charging that the GOP's ObamaCare replacement plan would help the wealthy with tax cuts while financially burdening average Americans. The Democratic senator took to Twitter to make his case, posting multiple tweets that slammed the Republican healthcare proposal. One tweet implied the GOP repeal and replace proposal would benefit the Trump family's healthcare coverage plan. (Beavers, 3/7)

Meanwhile, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is fighting for her legacy —

Politico: Pelosi's Last Stand: Saving Obamacare
Nancy Pelosi stands alone. As Republicans prepare to dismantle Obamacare, the longtime House Democratic leader is facing her biggest fight in years, perhaps the biggest since she twisted dozens of Democratic arms to pass the bill in the first place seven years ago. (Caygle and Bresnahan, 3/8)

12. So What Exactly Is In The Republicans' Health Plan?

Confused about what's in the American Health Care Act and what's changed from the Affordable Care Act? Media outlets break it down for you.

The Washington Post: GOP Health Care Bill Compared With Obama-Era Law
At first glance, the new health care bill from House Republicans appears to have similarities to the Obama-era law, like tax credits, protections for people with health problems, and the ability of parents to keep young adults on their insurance. But in most cases those components would work very differently under the GOP framework than is currently the case with the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 3/8)

Los Angeles Times: Obamacare 101: What's In The House Republicans' Replacement Plan?

Obamacare is pretty complex. So it shouldn't be a surprise that what the GOP is proposing in its place has a few knotty details. Here's a short guide to what's in the Republican plan and what it could mean for Americans' health coverage. (Levey, 3/7)

NPR: 7 Provisions To Watch In The GOP's Health Care Bill

The GOP plan also retains many of the features the public likes in the Affordable Care Act, like protections for people with existing health conditions. Here are seven provisions to look out for as the congressional debate unfolds over the next few weeks and months. (Fulton, 3/7)

The Washington Post: How The House Republicans' Proposed Obamacare Replacement Compares

On Monday, House leaders released legislation to replace the Affordable Care Act. If it passes, here's what would change. (Cameron and Shapiro, 3/7)

Kaiser Health News: Five Ways The GOP Health Bill Would Reverse Course From The ACA

After literally years of promises, House Republicans finally have a bill they say will "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act. Some conservative Republicans have derided the new proposal — the American Health Care Act — calling it "Obamacare light." It keeps intact some of the more popular features of the ACA, such as allowing adult children to stay on their parents' health plans to age 26 and, at least in theory, ensuring that people with preexisting conditions will still have access to insurance. (Rovner, 3/8)

KQED News: Your Cheat Sheet On The Republican Health Care Plan (And Its Impact On California)

Since Republican leaders in Washington released their plan to replace the Affordable

Care Act, also called Obamacare, there have been many questions about the specifics of the proposal and its impact on Californians. We've dug into the details to simplify this complex issue and create a cheat sheet for you. (Feibel, 3/7)

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Healthcare After Obamacare: Here's What's In The Replacement Proposal

House of Representatives Republicans released their plan to replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, with a law they say will be less onerous. Most Democrats disagree, saying millions of Americans could lose health coverage or find it too expensive. The Congressional Budget Office has not yet determined the plan's cost or the number of people who might lose coverage. But the debate is underway. (Eaton and Koff, 3/7)

NPR: Analysis: GOP Health Plan Won't Fix Obamacare Problems

On Monday evening, House Republicans finally released their own health care proposal. It would replace Obamacare's mandate to buy insurance and his subsidies to bring down the cost with a fixed refundable tax credit that people can use to buy coverage. Nobody's required to have a health plan. But if you don't get covered at the outset, you'll pay a penalty to buy it later. So does it fix the problems Republicans have laid out? Likely not. (Kodjak, 3/8)

The Washington Post: Republicans Say = 2Every American' Can Understand Their Obamacare Bill. Except For Me, Apparently.

Republicans' main problem with Obamacare isn't that it insures more people. It's that it does it in a ham-handed way: To hear Republicans describe the 2010 Affordable Care Act is to hear about a knotted tangle of overly burdensome federal government regulations that are strangling the health-care market. Republicans say their version is much cleaner, clearer and simpler. (Phillips, 3/7)

The Washington Post: What Does 'Repeal' Mean? The Answer Complicates The GOP's Health-Care Strategy.

After a day of bad reviews for the GOP leadership's preferred Affordable Care Act replacement, the House Freedom Caucus was ready for the spotlight. Dozens of reporters and cameramen had set up at the House Triangle. Some cable networks were even taking the Freedom Caucus news conference live, harking back to the time when tea party protests could rattle or derail business in Congress. But a few reporters were being held inside the Capitol by security guards. Vice President Pence was wrapping a visit to the Hill, talking to Freedom Caucus members, a few of whom had served with Pence when he was a congressman. When the vice president left, some of

the conservative rebellion's leaders were taking a measured — if still skeptical — tone about the American Health Care Act. (Weigel, 3/7)

13. Richest Households Will Pay Nearly \$200K Less Under New Health Plan

A look at how taxes will work under the American Health Care Act.

The Washington Post: The Massive Tax Cuts For The Rich Inside The GOP Health-Care Plan

Republicans' new health-care bill is a mass transfer of income that cuts taxes for the wealthiest Americans while cutting federal benefits for the middle and working class. Just two provisions in the Republican plan would allow the richest households to pay an average of nearly \$200,000 less under the GOP plan, according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. (Ehrenfreund, 3/7)

The Washington Post: Republicans' Obamacare Replacement Contains Huge Tax Cuts For Insurance Companies, But It Comes At A Cost.

The bill would repeal a slew of taxes that would have cost insurance, medical device makers and other health care companies tens of billions of dollars over a decade. The repeal of just one such provision — the health insurer tax — is a tax cut of \$145 billion over a decade, according to an analysis by the Joint Committee on Taxation. (Johnson, 3/7)

CQ Roll Call: Brady Defends Obamacare Tax Cuts As Pro-Growth

House Republicans have launched their first missive in the battle to slash individual tax rates by using the fast-moving reconciliation measure that would repeal or delay taxes, including several aimed at wealthy families, under the 2010 health care law. Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, on Tuesday promoted the tax cuts for wealthy families in the GOP's legislation to replace Obamacare and the new tax credits in the proposal as a harbinger of the across-the-board rate cuts envisioned by the House GOP in its tax overhaul. (Ota, 3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: House Health Plan Explained: How The Tax Credit Would Work

House Republicans' plan to repeal and replace parts of the 2010 Affordable Care Act would seek to help households purchase health insurance with a measure called an advanceable refundable tax credit. Here's an explanation of how that would work, and how it differs from the existing law. (Rubin, 3/8)

The Washington Post: What The GOP Health Plan Really Means For Taxes

The GOP proposal would also eliminate the complex web of tax increases established by Obamacare on people and companies — everything from tanning salons to medical device manufacturers — that help pay for benefits in the current law, like free breast cancer screenings, preventative care, and allowing people to remain on their parents' insurance until the age of 26. They would also help underwrite the cost of prohibiting insurers from banning those with pre-existing conditions. The combination of maintaining the most popular and well-known portions of Obamacare — and cutting taxes — is expected to cost the federal government as much as \$600 billion over ten years, according to the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation. (Snell, 3/8)

CQ Roll Call: House GOP Takes Aim At Obamacare Taxes

Here is a quick rundown of some of the taxes that would be repealed under the legislative package scheduled for markup on Wednesday. The information comes from the Ways and Means Committee's section-by-section summary. If passed, most of these taxes would be repealed in 2018. (3/7)

14. The 'Can-I-Keep-My-Doctor' Question Rears Its Head Again

It's a thorny issue that has plagued the Democrats, and now it's the Republicans' turn.

Stat: 'Can I Keep My Doctor?' The GOP's Turn To Answer The Question

Leaked older drafts of the GOP plan would have capped tax benefits for employer-based health insurance. If Republicans had made that change, putting the squeeze on employer coverage sooner or later, a half dozen experts told STAT that employer plans would likely start moving toward narrower health care provider networks to keep their costs down and stay under the cap. In other words, it would have extended the so-called "keep your doctor" problem to the much bigger employer market, which covers half of all Americans. The fallout could have been huge. (Scott, 3/8)

In other news —

Boston Globe: Another Savings Account To Worry About? You Might Get One With GOP Health Plan

In their newly unveiled plan to reshape the US health care system, House Republicans propose increasing the amount of money people can put into tax-free health savings accounts, part of a broader push to make individuals more responsible for their own medical spending, and less reliant on government. Think of it as a twist on your 401(k) retirement plan. You set up a tax-exempt investment fund, deposit your money, watch it

grow, and then use the proceeds to cover all manner of health care expenses, from lab tests to prescription drugs. (Horowitz, 3/7)

The Washington Post Fact Checker: New Anti-Obamacare Ads Conflate The Exchanges With The Entire Health-Care System

With the debate over the GOP replacement for the Affordable Care Act at full boil, a Republican nonprofit entity controlled by allies of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has launched a big ad buy to remind people what's wrong with the ACA in the first place. The 60-second spots target five Democrats running for reelection in 2018, as well as seeks to support six Republicans who face challenges or might be considered uncertain on how they would vote on a replacement bill. But as is often the case, the language of the ads leaves a misleading impression that the problems that afflict the ACA exchanges extend to the entire insurance market. (Kessler, 3/8)

WBUR: Key Obamacare Architect And A Former Insurer Assess The GOP Health Care Replacement Plan

The GOP finally unveiled its own health care reform package on Monday. The American Health Care Act would preserve some popular aspects of the health reform passed under President Obama, but the Republican plan would also make some sweeping changes. Key House committees are scheduled to vote on the new plan Wednesday. (Sundt, Chakrabarti and Bologna, 3/7)

NPR: GOP Cuts To Planned Parenthood Could Strand Patients, Directors Of Other Clinics Fear

Opponents of abortion rights have long argued that public funds for services like cancer screenings and contraception should go solely to health clinics that don't provide abortions. They've made "defunding Planned Parenthood" — or, to be more precise = 2 blocking the organization from receiving funding through federal programs like Medicaid — a major goal. (McCammon, 3/7)

Marketplace: Who Scores The GOP's Revised Health Plan And Its Costs?

Republicans have unveiled their long-awaited bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. The GOP plan keeps many of the stipulations in place and changes others. But the real questions on peoples' mind are "How much will it cost?" and "How many people will it cover?" Figuring out that scorecard out will fall to the Congressional Budget Office. (Allington, 3/7)

15. Something Critics On Both Sides Can Agree On: Poor Americans Are Going To End Up Worse Off

Critics says the policies in the Republicans' plan help the wealthy and hurt low-income Americans. Meanwhile, comments by House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, about iPhones and health care provoke some fiery responses, and a look at how lottery winners will be affected by the new plan.

Bloomberg: Obamacare Bill's Burden On Poor Brings Out Critics On All Sides
The effects of the long-promised measure to roll back Barack Obama's signature 2010 legislation would fall mainly on the poor, a fact that has set off opposition from both left and the right. The bill would cut taxes to the tune of about \$575 billion over a decade, mainly on the wealthy and health-insurance companies. It would limit money channeled to low-income people, raise costs for older Americans and wind down the expansion of Medicaid. (Trace and Edney, 3/7)

The Washington Post: Income Separates The Winners And Losers In Republicans' Health-Care Plans
The architecture of the tax credits in the legislation, which House committees are to begin debating Wednesday morning, would offer less help to lower-income Americans than the subsidies provided by the current law. It would steer more money to young adults at the expense of older ones. And it would most benefit consumers living in states in which insurance prices already are relatively low. (Goldstein and Eilperin, 3/7)

The New York Times: Millions Risk Losing Health Insurance In Republican Plan, Analysts Say
Millions of people who get private health coverage through the Affordable Care Act would be at risk of losing it under the replacement legislation proposed by House Republicans, analysts said Tuesday, with Americans in their 50s and 60s especially likely to find coverage unaffordable. Starting in 2020, the plan would do away with the current system of providing premium subsidies based on people's income and the cost of insurance where they live. Instead, it would provide tax credits of \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year based on their age. (Goodnough and Abelson, 3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: Apple's iPhone Makes (Another) Cameo In The Health-Care Debate
Some Republicans are arguing the rollback of Obamacare would put responsibility on Americans to make better choices as consumers, but one comment this morning didn't get a great reception. House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R., Utah) told CNN Tuesday that lower-income Americans may have to prioritize spending money on health-care rather than electronic gadgets such as iPhones. (Peterson and Andrews, 3/7)

Boston Globe: Jason Chaffetz Says People Should Invest In Health Care Instead Of Buying iPhones

One Republican lawmaker is defending the replacement for the Affordable Care Act by urging those who can't afford insurance to forgo purchases like iPhones. "Americans have choices and they've got to make a choice. And so maybe rather than getting that new iPhone that they just love and they want to go spend hundreds of dollars on that, maybe they should invest it in their own health care. They've got to make those decisions themselves," Jason Chaffetz said on CNN Tuesday morning. Chaffetz was responding to criticism that the GOP replacement for the Affordable Care Act provides a better deal for higher income Americans while leaving poorer Americans worse off. (Prignano, 3/7)

McClatchy: Rep. Chaffetz Tells People They Might Have To Choose Between iPhones And Healthcare

Healthcare is a highly complicated issue that has plagued both political parties in the U.S. for years, not to mention everyday Americans who struggle under huge costs. But Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, seemed to think there was an easy solution to affording healthcare when he appeared on CNN Tuesday morning – just stop buying iPhones. (Irby, 3/7)

The Washington Post: GOP's Obamacare Replacement Cracks Down On Lottery Winners Who Receive Medicaid

The lottery is a famously bad bet. People are more likely to be zapped by lightning while drowning, canonized a saint or hit by an asteroid than win a jackpot. Very few people walk away from the Powerball with massively engorged bank accounts. ... Yet, ten pages into the American Health Care Act, the bill that House Republicans unveiled Monday as the replacement for the Affordable Care Act took aim at lottery winners who receive Medicaid, devoting roughly a tenth of the 60-odd-page bill to lottery winners. (Guarino, 3/8)

16. Stakes Are Sky High For Hospitals, Which Could Be Particularly Hard-Hit By New Health Bill

The American Hospital Association came out strongly against the Republicans' plan.

Stat: Hospitals Could Bear The Financial Brunt Of The American Health Care Act
Hospitals could face a huge financial hit from the Medicaid overhaul as they grapple with lost payments and reduced volume. Republicans would freeze the expansion in 2020 (11 million people have gained Medicaid coverage under Obamacare) and impose block grants, or per capita limits in state funding, by 2020...The GOP

replacement could also expose hospitals to greater financial risk from patients who buy insurance in the individual insurance market. The proposal would replace the current subsidy program by 2020 with age-based tax credits. Robert Huckman, a professor of business administration at Harvard Business School, said the change would broaden financial assistance across the income scale, but provide less assistance per person than Obamacare to the people most in need. (Ross, 3/7)

USA Today: GOP Obamacare Repeal And Replacement Plan Riles Patients, Hospitals
The long-awaited House Republican plan to replace the Affordable Care Act will hurt low-income consumers who rely on federal subsidies or Medicaid for their coverage, as well as the hospitals who are required to treat them whether or not they are insured, health care experts say. It's harder to find the winners under the new bill, a joint effort by House Republicans including Speaker Paul Ryan. (O'Donnell, 3/7)

The Hill: Hospitals Come Out Against GOP Healthcare Bill
The American Hospital Association announced Tuesday its opposition to the GOP's healthcare reform plan. The hospital association is the first health industry group to expressly come out against the legislation, dubbed the American Health Care Act, which House GOP leadership unveiled on Monday. (Wilson, 3/7)

17. Industry Applauds Some Aspects Of Bill, But Sees Major Pitfalls As Well

Health care companies are still parsing the new legislation but some of the moves are bound to please -- such as the elimination of some taxes -- while others are cause for concern.

The Wall Street Journal: Health-Care Companies Find Some Gifts, Big Risks In Plan To Replace Obamacare

For health-care companies, the new House Republican proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act carries significant risks, as it would likely mean a decline in insured patients and continued worries about an unstable market. Insurers, hospitals and medical-device manufacturers are still parsing the details of the draft legislation, which could change considerably as it moves through the House and Senate, and they are applauding moves like the elimination of some taxes. But the proposal's pullbacks on Medicaid and federal insurance subsidies could significantly reduce the number of people with health coverage over time, analysts and industry officials said, a serious problem for health-care providers and insurers. (Wilde Mathews and Evans, 3/7)

Bloomberg: How Republicans' Obamacare-Repeal Plan Would Affect The Health Sector

There's plenty for the health-care industry to like in the latest Republican proposal to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would lower taxes and eliminate rules. There's also plenty not to like because the plan would funnel less money into helping people pay for insurance and hospital visits. The GOP bill, which still has a long way before it may become law, would replace Obamacare with a more limited program of insurance subsidies. That would probably result in less comprehensive insurance, increasing the risk that people will be unable to pay hospitals and doctors when they show up for care. At the same time, the proposal would eliminate billions of dollars of taxes on the industry. (Tracer, Greifeld and Cortez, 3/7)

Modern Healthcare: Insurers Want Trump To Rethink Shortening Open Enrollment
Insurance companies are calling on the Trump administration to rethink a proposal to shorten the open-enrollment period over their fears that it will result in only the sickest individuals signing up for coverage. Several insurers and providers including Kaiser Permanente weighed in on a Trump administration proposed rule aiming to stabilize the individual marketplace created by the Affordable Care Act, voicing concerns about several provisions of the wide-ranging rule. The CMS received more than 2,500 comments on the proposed rule before the deadline passed on Tuesday. (Dickson, 3/7)

The CT Mirror: Insurers Quietly Assessing GOP Health Plan's Benefits And Pitfalls
The nation's health insurers are weighing the GOP's newly released bill to replace the Affordable Care Act, which contains things they wanted – and some things they may not like, but for now are keeping their opinions to themselves. While many big insurers, including Aetna, United Healthcare and Anthem, said they lost money on plans they sold in certain ACA exchanges, they had several years to come to terms with the Affordable Care Act's weaknesses and pushed for reform of the health law, not its repeal. (Radelat, 3/7)

The Hill: AARP Rips GOP's 'Harmful' Healthcare Legislation
AARP is going on the warpath against the Republican proposal to repeal and replace ObamaCare. The lobbying group for seniors accused House Republican leaders of crafting legislation that increases insurance premiums for consumers, while giving a “sweetheart deal” to “big drug companies and special interests.” 0...Republicans unveiled the long-awaited healthcare reform proposal, called the American Health Care Act, on Monday. The AARP blasted several aspects of the legislation, including provisions that would scale back the Medicaid expansion and cut back the amount of federal funding per enrollee. (Wilson, 3/7)

The Hill: Union President Blasts GOP Healthcare Plan After Meeting With Trump
Union president Richard Trumka slammed the Trump-backed GOP healthcare

proposal, just hours after meeting with the president at the White House on Tuesday. The AFL–CIO president said he talked about a variety of topics with President Donald Trump, but he did not mention healthcare as one of them, according to a CNN report. (Beavers, 3/7)

CQ Roll Call: Pharma Shielded From Major Impact In GOP Health Care Bill
The pharmaceutical industry has faced consistent warnings from President Donald Trump that lowering prescription drug prices would be a high priority. But among all the health industry players affected by the Republican legislation released Monday, drug manufacturers seem to have the least to worry about. Trump continued his threats in a tweet Tuesday. “I am working on a new system where there will be competition in the Drug Industry. Pricing for the American people will come way down!” (Siddons, 3/8)

And a look at how the news affected Wall Street —

The Wall Street Journal: Health-Care Overhaul Gets A Shrug From Wall Street
Health-insurance shares barely budged Tuesday morning, despite that negative change in policy. The muted share reaction is well founded. For starters, the final bill is bound to change; any law will have to pass the Senate, where the Republicans hold just a two-seat majority. Republican governors in states with expanded Medicaid coverage have bristled at the prospect of rolling back Medicaid. Those forces will likely cause some provisions of the bill to soften. (Grant, 3/7)

The Associated Press: Losses For Drugmakers, Hospitals Pull Stocks Lower
U.S. stocks declined for the third time in four days on Tuesday as health care companies took center stage. Drugmakers fell after President Donald Trump said he wants to bring drug prices down. Insurers rose and hospital companies dropped after Republicans in Congress introduced a bill intended to replace the 2010 Affordable Care Act. (Jay, 3/7)

18. How The Effects Of GOP's Health Plan Will Ripple Through The States

Media outlets in California, Tennessee, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maryland, Texas, Georgia, Virginia and Connecticut report on the Republican health care plan.

Los Angeles Times: Millions Of Californians Likely Would Lose Coverage Under GOP Obamacare Replacement, Experts Say
Millions of Californians probably would lose health coverage under the Obamacare replacement bill released by House Republicans this week, experts say. The long-

awaited GOP alternative removes the requirement that all Americans sign up for health insurance or pay a penalty, alters the amount of financial assistance offered for plans sold on the marketplaces and bans federal funding for Planned Parenthood. But what probably would affect the greatest number of Californians and raise the toughest questions for the state are proposed cuts to Medicaid, which covers more than a third of California's residents. (Karlamañgla, Mason and Myers, 3/7)

Nashville Tennessean: How Obamacare Replacement Plan Could Impact Tennessee
The bill dramatically reshapes the Medicaid program, known as TennCare in Tennessee. It would transition Medicaid from the federal match funding mechanism that is in place to a per capita program in which the state would get a lump sum per enrollee. A per capita cap is Gov. Bill Haslam's preference over a block grant, which is a set allotment to the state to run TennCare for a period of time, regardless of enrollment. A change to the funding mechanism, however, means states would have to make decisions on who or what benefits to cover. Right now, TennCare covers pregnant women, children and some people who are disabled. Children are usually much cheaper to cover than other groups. (Fletcher, 3/7)

Nashville Tennessean: Knoxville, VUMC Patients Could Get New Options Under GOP Health Bill

A section of the legislation pitched by Republicans in the U.S. House could open a path for people in the greater Knoxville area to access an insurance plan with a premium subsidy in 2018. The same provision would help people afford plans that cover Vanderbilt University Medical Center in the greater Nashville area. Premium tax credits could be used to purchase of "certain qualified health plans" off-exchange — where they are currently not available— under the legislation, which is called the American Health Care Act. (Fletcher, 3/7)

Chicago Tribune: What The Obamacare Replacement Plan Could Mean In Illinois
Hospital leaders and patient advocates say the bill, if passed, would lead to fewer people in Illinois with health insurance, creating a dangerous and costly situation for patients, hospitals and the state...Some hospital leaders and patient advocates in Illinois are nervous. A.J. Wilhelmi, president and CEO of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, said some Illinois residents might not be able to afford to continue buying coverage on the exchange under the House GOP plan. (Schencker, 3/7)

The Philadelphia Inquirer: After Long Urging Repeal, Philly-Area GOP Cautious On Obamacare Roll Back Plan

GOP lawmakers from the Philadelphia region said they were still reviewing the plan unveiled Monday night, neither supporting nor opposing a measure that could finally reshape the country's health system to match Republicans' vision and roll back much of

what is widely called Obamacare. Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.) said he was still combing through the 123-page measure: "I haven't made a decision yet." Rep. Tom MacArthur (R., N.J.) told a town hall audience Monday night that he was unsure how he would vote. He worried about changes that could limit the law's Medicaid expansion, which, according to Gov. Christie, has helped cover 487,000 previously uninsured New Jerseyans, with federal funding that has saved the state \$2 billion. (Tamari, 3/7)

Denver Post: Few Cheers For GOP Healthcare Plan In Colorado

The proposal prescribes a laundry list of changes to the 2010 health care package, better known as Obamacare. For Colorado, the most dramatic impact would be with Medicaid, a federal-state program that provides health insurance to disabled or low-income residents. Under the Affordable Care Act, states were allowed to expand the number of residents they cover through Medicaid — leading Colorado to add an estimated 407,000 residents to the rolls. The Republican plan would phase out this expansion starting in 2020 while changing the way the federal government pays for Medicaid by instituting a per-person cap — a switch that would mean "Colorado could expect less federal funding over the years," according to the Colorado Health Institute, a local think tank. (Matthews, Frank and Ingold, 3/7)

Boston Globe: How Would The GOP Health Plan Play Out In Mass.?

As Congress debates the Republican proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act, Massachusetts is in a unique position. The state's landmark 2006 health care overhaul resulted in near-universal coverage long before the federal law was enacted — so, no matter what Congress passes, it is likely to play out differently here. But Massachusetts is not immune to the tidal wave of change that could flow from the proposed legislation. In part, that's because the state's program now conforms to the federal Affordable Care Act, which the GOP plan would replace. (Freyer, 3/8)

The Baltimore Sun: Overhaul Of Health Law Faces Criticism From Both Sides In Maryland

Health care advocates and Democratic lawmakers in Maryland called a newly released GOP plan to replace the Affordable Care Act a threat to coverage for more than 400,000 state residents, while top Republicans, including Gov. Larry Hogan, argued that the law must be changed to preserve access to health insurance. "The governor doesn't want to see anyone losing health care," said Doug Mayer, Hogan's chief spokesman. "But he wants a system that works." (Cohn, 3/7)

Houston Chronicle: Texans Assess Potential Health Care Fallout

Many policy watchers in Texas are worried that a reconfiguration in how people get help buying insurance will hit the poor and middle class hardest and lead to a spike in the state's already high uninsured rate...The long-awaited Republican plan, unveiled

Monday evening, calls not only for elimination of the mandates that require people to carry insurance — a hallmark of the existing Affordable Care Act — but also propose swapping income-based federal subsidies to help people afford buy insurance for a refundable tax credit system that is age-based, with the amount of assistance rising as people age and presumably use more health care. (Deam, 3/7)

Texas Tribune: Proposed Federal Health Plan Brings Uncertainty In Texas
While Texas state leaders and legislators have been calling for the repeal of Obamacare since day one, the state has benefited from it. Texas' uninsured rate went from 22.1 percent in 2013 to 17.1 percent in 2015, according to the latest U.S. Census data. But after Republicans in Congress unveiled their long-awaited plan to repeal the law on Monday, Curran said he was concerned that Texas patients and doctors would not want to understand how the changes will affect them. (Evans and Livingston, 3/7)

Georgia Health News: Georgia's Outlook Uncertain If Replacement For Obamacare Passes
How would the new health care plan proposed by congressional Republicans affect Georgia? Much of the impact has yet to be analyzed. Under many of the plan's elements, though, the states would be treated similarly. One striking change nationwide would fulfill a longtime GOP campaign promise: The newly unveiled American Health Care Act would eliminate the mandate for individuals to buy coverage or pay a penalty. (Miller, 3/7)

Richmond Times Dispatch: ACA Replacement Proposal Could Mean Less Funds For Virginians
Though House Republicans late Monday finally revealed their plan to replace the Affordable Care Act after months of speculation, uncertainties still abound about how much the plan might save or cost the federal government, and how many may lose or gain insurance because of it. But health policy professionals, experts and advocates in Virginia have already noted that the newly proposed American Health Care Act, while retaining many of the most popular patient protection parts of the ACA, will shift costs onto the patient. (Demeria, 3/7)

The CT Mirror: What The GOP Obamacare Replacement Bill Means For You And CT
Members of Congress will begin moving forward today with efforts to pass the American Health Care Act, a proposal to replace many of the major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, the health law commonly known as Obamacare. House Republicans say their plan will provide relief to those burdened by higher taxes, increased premiums and limited insurance options as a result of Obamacare. (Levin Becker, 3/8)

California Healthline: GOP Health Proposal Would Upend Consumers' Cost Calculations In California

For better or worse, Californians who aren't insured through their employers could see major changes in their health insurance costs under a Republican replacement for the Affordable Care Act. A House GOP proposal introduced Monday would provide substantially less financial help to many consumers in higher-cost areas of California, from San Francisco to Monterey. But people in lower-cost markets like Los Angeles could fare better. (Terhune, 3/7)

PHARMACEUTICALS

19. Drug Stocks Slip Over Trump's Pricing Tweet, But Not As Much As They Used To

In his tweet, the president promised that he's working on a way to curb high drug prices for Americans.

Stat: Trump's Latest Tweet, Pledging A New System To Price Drugs, Dings Biopharma Stocks

President Trump's tweeting still has the ability to rattle biopharma stocks, as a cryptic missive early Tuesday sent company shares south. "I am working on a new system where there will be competition in the Drug Industry," he wrote on Twitter. "Pricing for the American people will come way down!" (Meghana Keshavan, 3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: Analysts Scratch Their Heads Over Trump Drug Price Tweet
President Donald Trump is keeping biotech analysts busy trying to match up his opaque drug-pricing rhetoric with the complexities of the U.S. health-care system. Mr. Trump said on Twitter Tuesday morning that he is, "working on a new system where there will be competition in the Drug Industry." He also cited an effort to "get rid of state lines" when selling health care, which he said would be in parts two and three of the Affordable Care Act overhaul. (Eisen, 3/7)

Bloomberg: Trump Sends Pharma Stocks Down With New Tweet On Drug Prices
Trump sent his tweet the morning after House Republicans unveiled their long-awaited legislation to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act late Monday, which he also touted Tuesday, adding that competition will come later in the health-care rollout. "We are intrigued by the timing of President Trump's tweet this morning as it followed rapidly behind the House health-care reform bill, and we believe shows the administration's continued focus on drug pricing," Vamil Divan, an analyst at Credit Suisse AG, said in a note to clients. (Hopkins, 3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: Trump's Latest Drug Pricing Tweet Hits Biotech Stocks
Tuesday's premarket tweet was enough to drag down the iShares Nasdaq Biotechnology exchange-traded fund, which tracks drug companies that could be hit by lower prices. The ETF dropped 1% shortly after the opening bell as some major players in the industry tumbled. Valeant Pharmaceuticals International and Endo International Plc both fell 4.1%. Mallinckrodt Plc fell 2.4%, while Perrigo Plc was down 2.3%. Eli Lilly and was down 1.7% and Allergan Plc dropped 1.5%. (Eisen, 3/7)

San Francisco Chronicle: Drugmakers Fall As Investors See Pricing Threat From Trump

In January, Trump accused drugmakers of "getting away with murder= 2 on drug prices, and pharmaceutical and biotech stocks fell sharply. Less than three weeks later, he held an apparently friendly sit-down with industry executives at the White House and said he wants to speed up the drug approval process, which could bring costs down for drug companies. The stocks moved higher afterward. (Jay and Johnson, 3/7)

For more news on high drug costs, check out our weekly feature, Prescription Drug Watch, which includes coverage and perspectives of the issue.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

20. More Overweight Americans Are Not Trying To Lose The Extra Pounds

Though the health risks of obesity are widely known, experts say that the difficulty of shedding weight and keeping it off is a top reason behind the trend. Today's other public health stories cover hepatitis C, arthritis, genetic testing and HIV.

Los Angeles Times: As Obesity Keeps Rising, More Americans Are Just Giving Up
It stands to reason that if you know you're overweight or obese, and you know your extra pounds are unhealthy, that you've made a stab at losing weight. Right? Not so much anymore, new research shows. The proportion of American adults who were either overweight or obese has been growing steadily for decades, rising from about 53% a generation ago to roughly 66% more recently. (Healy, 3/7)

WBUR: Deadly Diets: Study Links Unhealthy Eating To Nearly Half Of American Heart Deaths

No single bag of chips or bacon burger will kill you unless you choke on it. But in the big picture — the very big picture — how we Americans eat does often send us to earlier graves, and a new study out of Tufts University quantifies just how deadly our diets

may be. It estimates that over 318,000 deaths a year, or nearly half of American deaths from major "cardiometabolic" killers — heart disease, stroke and diabetes — were hastened by unhealthy eating. (Goldberg, 3/7)

USA Today: Most Boomers Infected With Liver-Damaging Hepatitis C Virus Do Not Know It

Few Baby Boomers have been tested for the liver-damaging hepatitis C virus, despite recommendations that all members of that generation have the blood test at least once, new research suggests. The share of boomers who had the test barely budged in the two years after health authorities first recommended it for everyone born between 1945 and 1965, according to a report published Wednesday in American Journal of Preventive Medicine. (Painter, 3/8)

The Washington Post: Arthritis Afflicts About 1 In 4 Adults In The U.S., CDC Report Finds

About one in four adults in the United States suffers from arthritis, according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vital Signs report published Tuesday. Of the 54 million people in the United States who have this debilitating condition, not all are elderly. About 60 percent of those with arthritis were between the ages of 18 and 64, that is, working age. Activity limitations from arthritis increased by 20 percent since 2002, the report found. Simple, everyday tasks, such as walking or lifting bags, are challenging for 24 million people affected by the condition in the United States. (Naqvi, 3/7)

Stat: Democrats Push For Better Patient Access To Genetic Testing

Fifteen Democrats in Congress are seizing on momentum in the field of precision medicine, penning a letter Tuesday to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price urging increased patient access to genetic testing. The letter was sent on the same day the Personalized Medicine Coalition hosted a congressional briefing, which featured Senator Edward Markey of Massachusetts, a Democrat. (Facher, 3/7)

Orlando Sentinel: NAACP Initiative To Talk To Local Pastors About HIV

NAACP training program is coming to Orlando this week to talk to the leaders of Orlando's black churches about the importance of their institutions in tackling HIV infection in the African American community. Although rates of HIV infection have dropped over time, the virus continues to disproportionately affect African Americans in the U.S. and here in Central Florida. (Miller, 3/7)

21. Surge In Fatal Overdoses Overwhelms West Virginia's Burial Program

In other news on the nation's opioid epidemic, a New Hampshire hospital sees benefits after telling surgeons to cut back on prescribing painkillers, dentists in New Jersey also curb the use of opioids and an Ohio coroner works to fight the state's heroin crisis.

The Washington Post: Drugs Are Killing So Many People In West Virginia That The State Can't Keep Up With The Funerals
Deaths in West Virginia have overwhelmed a state program providing burial assistance for needy families for at least the fifth year in a row, causing the program to be nearly out of money four months before the end of the fiscal year, according to the state's Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). Funeral directors in West Virginia say the state's drug overdose epidemic, the worst in the nation, is partly to blame. (Ingraham, 3/7)

The Washington Post: Surgeons Were Told To Stop Prescribing So Many Painkillers. The Results Were Remarkable.
The head of general surgery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center had a remarkably simple idea not long ago: What if the department suggested that surgeons limit prescriptions of narcotic pain pills to a specific number for different kinds of operations? The results were dramatic: The number of pills prescribed by doctors for five common outpatient surgeries dropped by 53 percent, and patients didn't consume all the pills they were given, according to a study that will be published this week in the journal *Annals of Surgery*. (Bernstein, 3/7)

Kaiser Health News: Dentists Work To Ease Patients' Pain With Fewer Opioids
Firsts can be life-changing — think about your first kiss, your first time behind the wheel of a car. But what about the first time you got a prescription for a narcotic? James Hatzell, from Collingswood, N.J., is now a technology officer for a college addiction treatment program. He didn't realize it at the time, but that spring day of his junior year of high school — seven years ago — was a pivotal moment in his life. (Gordon, 3/8)

Columbus Dispatch: Franklin County Coroner Spars With Politicians Over Heroin Fight
Franklin County Coroner Anahi Ortiz is concerned that two of the area's most powerful politicians want to take the central role in a task force she helped create to fight the heroin epidemic... Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady and Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther have scheduled a meeting for Thursday with other public officials and agencies to organize greater involvement in the heroin-addiction battle. (Perry, 3/8)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG WATCH

22. Negotiating Drug Prices Works For The VA -- But That May Be Because Of Its Defined Population

News outlets report on stories related to pharmaceutical drug pricing.

Stat: The VA Got A Good Price For A Hep C Drug. Why Not Medicare?

As President Trump tweets yet another promise to lower drug prices, a new analysis offers an example of what can happen when the federal government negotiates with manufacturers. During a 12-month period ended November 2015, the Veterans Choice Program, which was created by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, paid a median price of \$12,500 for a month's supply of Harvoni, a hepatitis C drug sold by Gilead Sciences. Since most patients typically are treated for two to three months, the cost was closer to \$25,000 to \$37,500 per person, according to the analysis in Medical Care. (Silverman, 3/7)

Bloomberg: Gilead Executive Says Pharmacy Benefit Managers Keep Prices High
Gilead Sciences Inc.'s hepatitis C cure set off a firestorm of criticism over high drug prices in 2014 that hasn't let up since. Now an executive says the company can't cut the product's price because middlemen who manage drug benefits would refuse to cover it. ... Pharmacy benefit managers such as Express Scripts Holding Co. and CVS Health Corp. negotiate drug reimbursement, often in secrecy, for employers and health plans. While PBMs say they deliver lower prices for customers and patients, drugmakers have begun aggressively implicating the middlemen in high medication costs that have become a frequent target of Washington lawmakers and President Donald Trump. (Chen and Langreth, 3/3)

The Hill: Top Oversight Dem To Meet With Trump About Prescription Drug Prices
Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) will meet President Trump at the White House on Wednesday to discuss lowering prescription drug prices, an issue the top House Oversight Committee Democrat has long advocated for. The White House gathering comes shortly after Trump claimed that Cummings canceled a meeting last month because of partisan politics. (Marcos, 3/7)

Kaiser Health News: Three Key Senators Ask GAO To Investigate Possible Abuses Of The Orphan Drug Act

Building on weeks of mounting pressure to address high prescription drug prices, three influential U.S. senators have asked the government's accountability arm to investigate potential abuses of the Orphan Drug Act. In a March 3 letter to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) raised the possibility that regulatory or legislative

changes might be needed “to preserve the intent of this vital law” that gives drugmakers lucrative incentives to develop drugs for rare diseases. (Tribble and Lupkin, 3/7)

Stat: More States Weigh Making It Easier To Sell EpiPen Alternatives

In the wake of the controversy over EpiPen pricing, lawmakers in several states are introducing bills that would allow pharmacists to substitute alternatives for the pricey allergic-reaction device without requiring a new prescription from a physician. The latest example was introduced last week in Ohio, where pharmacists are currently prohibited from making any substitutions for the device. Similar legislation was introduced in recent weeks in New York and Vermont, and last fall in New Jersey. A somewhat comparable was also introduced in Hawaii. (Silverman, 3/6)

Stat: How A Biotech Billionaire Used A Donation To Boost His Business

For months, Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong would continue to reap praise for his generosity in publicity put out by the university. Not mentioned in any of the tributes: \$10 million of his donation would be sent right back to one of his companies. And the contract for his gift was worded in a way that left the University of Utah with no other choice. The university health system did get free and valuable information for genetics research through the deal. But a STAT investigation has found that Soon-Shiong benefited even more from his charitable donation. He got reams of patient data to help him build a new commercial product meant to assess patients' risk of rare and inherited diseases. He got a stream of cash for one of his struggling companies. (Robbins, 3/6)

Kaiser Health News: 'Right-To-Try' Laws Expose Dying Patients To Exploitation, Ethicists Warn

In the past three years, 33 U.S. states have passed laws aimed at helping dying people get easier access to experimental treatments. Supporters say these patients are just looking for the “right to try” these treatments. Such laws may sound compassionate, but medical ethicists warn they pose worrisome risks to the health and finances of vulnerable patients. (Feibel, 3/6)

Bloomberg: Marathon's \$89,000 Drug May Exploit Patients, Senators Say

Marathon Pharmaceuticals LLC is facing more criticism over the \$89,000 price tag on its drug for a rare muscle disorder as a group of eight U.S. lawmakers said they're concerned that it “exploits” patients. In a March 3 letter to Marathon Chief Executive Officer Jeffrey Aronin, seven Democratic U.S. senators and one independent demanded information on the closely held drugmaker's pricing practices and product development costs for Emflaza, used to treat lethal Duchenne muscular dystrophy. (Greifeld, 3/6)

Stat: Genentech Hits A Sour Note With Gwen Stefani Concert For Reps

When Genentech sales reps gathered in late January in Las Vegas for their national sales meeting, they were rewarded with a treat — Gwen Stefani, the popular singer, performed for the crowd, according to photos posted online. It remains unclear what she was paid for her show at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. A Genentech spokeswoman declined to comment, as did Stefani's booking agent. However, Stefani has commanded upwards of \$350,000 to perform at private events, according to data from Celebrity Talent International that was cited in a Business Insider story in 2014. (Silverman, 3/7)

The Fiscal Times: How Drug Companies Are Scrambling To Respond To Pressure Over Soaring Prices

President Donald Trump used his speech to a joint session of Congress Tuesday night to renew his call to contain soaring prescription drug prices. His demand comes as the pharmaceutical industry launches a public relations campaign aimed at reducing public anger and the threat of increased regulation. Trump, who once complained that the pharmaceutical industry is "getting away with murder" by overcharging consumers and government agencies, said that his administration and Congress must "work to bring down the artificially high price of drugs and bring them down immediately." (Pianin, 3/1)

Stat: Who You Calling 'Slow'? FDA May Bristle At Trump's Latest Dig

When President Trump criticized the Food and Drug Administration drug approval process as "slow and burdensome" on Tuesday, you may have heard a mysterious noise. And that noise may have been the sound of thousands of agency staffers banging their heads against the wall. FDA officials have long bristled at the notion that they move too slowly to approve new drugs. Part of their job, after all, is to ensure that any drugs they approve are both safe and effective — and that, they point out, can take time. The standard review process now takes a median of 10 months, down from nearly 13 months in 2005, according to the FDA. Companies can shrink that process to eight months if they get a priority review. (Kaplan, 3/1)

The Motley Fool: How Are Drug Prices Determined?

A lot goes into getting a drug into a patient's hands, but the complexity of the distribution channel is only one reason why drug prices are high. As drugs get increasingly intricate, they're becoming more costly to develop, and that has an impact on prices, too. How can you determine if a drug price is fair? (Campbell and Harjes, 3/5)

23. Perspectives: Trump Is Trying To Fix A Wheel That (For The Most Part) Isn't Broken

Read recent commentaries about drug-cost issues.

Stat: Dear Mr. President: Here's Why Your Take On The FDA Is Wrong

Dear President Trump: During your speech to Congress last week, you took a whack at the Food and Drug Administration for its "slow and burdensome" approach toward approving medicines. You then suggested that if "we slash the restraints" on the agency, Americans will be blessed with more miracle cures. To be sure, the FDA is not infallible. Like any institution, the agency is a collection of people who sometimes make mistakes or exercise poor judgment. And the public is right to demand more new medicines more quickly. (Ed Silverman, 3/6)

Bloomberg: Trump Speech Leaves Health Care A Big Mess

The health-care goals President Donald Trump mentioned in his address to a joint session of Congress Tuesday night were a high-water mark for policy specificity from this president. But that mark was a low bar. The lack of detail was still glaring, and Trump either skirted the alligators lurking in the morass of Affordable Care Act repeal and replacement, or just poked them with a long stick. The process remains as chaotic as ever. That's a threat to health insurers who focus narrowly on government programs. It may also hurt those who don't. (Max Nisen, 3/1)

Stat: Employers Have The Power To Greatly Transform Cancer Care

Over the last decade, private employers from Boeing to Xerox have led the nation in developing innovative strategies for delivering better health at less cost. Whatever the Trump administration and Congress decide to do about the Affordable Care Act in 2017, this business role won't — and shouldn't — change. In fact, it should expand, especially if employers are bold enough to ask the administration to roll back outdated regulations that prevent employers, insurers, and drug companies from linking drug prices to real-world health outcomes. (Paul Howard and Lauren Pickering, 3/3)

The Daily Herald: Drugmakers Need To Show Costs Behind Drug Prices

There is no shortage of outrageous examples of medication price hikes by pharmaceutical companies. Take your pick (and swallow with a full glass of water): "Pharma Bro" Martin Shkreli, who jacked the price of a drug used to treat patients with malaria and HIV by 5,000 percent; Mylan, which raised the price of its EpiPen auto-injector for life-threatening allergy attacks to \$365 for a generic drug that normally costs a dollar a dose; and more recently drugmaker Kaleo, which has increased the price for a two-pack of its "talking? D Naloxone auto-injector — used to halt opioid overdoses — from \$690 in 2014 to \$4,500 today. (3/3)

San Francisco Chronicle: Congress Could Find Common Ground Over Escalating Drug Prices

Pharma Bro is back. In this case, it's not a disgraced pharmaceutical executive but a drug firm looking to sell a life-saving drug for \$89,000 a year, even though it's available from overseas for less than \$2,000. It's an example of whipsawing drug prices that are infuriating both Democrats and Republicans and leading major pharmaceutical firms to promise to curb prescription drug costs... The pressure is building in ways that could produce sweeping changes in drug pricing. (3/1)

Lincoln Journal-Star: Shine Light On Pricing Of Prescriptions

The story in the Sunday Journal Star, "Sworn to secrecy, drugstores stay silent as customers overpay," cited examples in other states, but the same thing is happening in Nebraska. It's a nationwide problem. At the heart of the controversy is the giant pharmacy benefit management industry -- perhaps the largest industry of which you have never heard, even though it has companies that are larger than some household names like Pepsi, Coca-Cola and Boeing. (3/3)

Bloomberg: Roche's New Drugs May Protect Its Old Ones

Roche Holding AG's blockbuster cancer drugs face a huge impending sales decline in the next few years. Its investors aren't worried. The company's ADRs spiked as much 6.8 percent on Thursday, in response to positive trial data for a combination of Herceptin -- one of those big blockbusters -- and a newer drug called Perjeta. (Max Nisen, 3/2)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

24. Setting The Scene For The GOP Replacement Plan

Even as this legislative proposal is met with substantial criticism among editorial writers, not everyone takes this hard line. Some opinion writers offer views on the process ahead.

The Wall Street Journal: ObamaCare 2.0

House Republicans have finally rolled out their new health-care proposal, and it's receiving heated criticism from both left and right—and not because it's so good. Yet it does represent a better dog's breakfast than the incoherent Obama scheme it would replace. Let's start from the top. "Repeal" is a meaningless political gesture: New laws supersede or amend existing laws, so if Republicans have a health-care plan, they could just enact it. (Holman W. Jenkins, Jr., 3/7)

USA Today: Our Health Care Plan For America: Paul Ryan

When I took the speaker's gavel, I told my colleagues that it's no longer good enough to just say what we're against. We had to show what we're for. That's why last year we

released a complete policy agenda — tracking closely with ideas from our presidential nominee, Donald Trump — to tackle all of the big challenges facing this country. The truth is, we have solutions to all of the many problems that Barack Obama left behind. (House Speaker Paul Ryan, 3/7)

USA Today: What's The Rush On Health Care?: Our View

Consideration of the measure is set to begin Wednesday in two House committees. If Republican leaders don't pull the bill in the face of considerable internal opposition, the full House could vote on it within the next few weeks. In contrast, Obamacare was the subject of lengthy public hearings and private negotiations during the winter, spring and summer of 2009. The first House committee action came that July, after the CBO came out with its estimates of the cost and the number of people who'd gain insurance. (3/7)

The Wall Street Journal: A Historic Health-Care Moment

The American Health Care Act would be the most consequential GOP social-policy reform since the welfare overhaul of 1996. Not only does the bill repair the failures of the Affordable Care Act, it starts to correct many of the government-created dysfunctions that have bedeviled U.S. health care for decades. Opening this critical legislative campaign is a test of how well Republicans can manage political and economic reality. (3/7)

RealClear Health: The GOP's Forced March On Health Care Begins

House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have begun a forced march of their members toward what they hope will be the enactment of legislation repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Ryan and the chairman of the key committees in the House released their initial pieces of the legislation last evening (the plan is currently broken into two parts, reflecting the jurisdiction of the two main committees, Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce). It is clear from a quick review of the plan, and from initial reactions to it from others, that the task before them remains daunting. (James C. Capretta, 3/8)

Chicago Tribune: As Obamacare Teeters: Evaluating A GOP Fix

House Republicans delivered a long-promised Obamacare replacement Monday night. It's a strong bid to replace an increasingly feeble law. President Donald Trump tweeted his support for the "wonderful new" bill. Some other Republicans are in open revolt. Let's slow down here. There are some huge blanks still to be filled in: Will people lose coverage because they won't be able to afford it as premium subsidies shrink, as critics claim? Will the plan cost the federal government more or less than an increasingly shaky Obamacare would? Health economists are busy at their calculators, so answers to those and other key questions should be forthcoming soon. (3/7)

25. Strong Reactions, Scathing Criticisms: Opposing Perspectives, Analysis Of The American Health Care Act

Opinion writers offer their unflattering takes on the Republican's replacement plan.

The Washington Post: An Obamacare Repeal That's Both Heartless And Reckless
The American Health Care Act, which House Republicans unveiled Monday night with White House support, is repeal and replace, kind of. It has some suspicious similarities to Obamacare. But it marks a sharp departure in at least one crucial respect: fiscal responsibility. The bill would repeal a vast array of the Affordable Care Act's pay-fors — taxes on upper-income people and on health-care-related entities including drugs, insurance and medical devices. To finance the spending it still envisions, the bill would replace those by cutting Medicaid and other assistance to poor and near-poor people.
(3/7)

The New York Times: How Republicans Plan To Ration Health Care
It looks as if Republicans want to bring back health care rationing. In 2010, Mark Price, a 37-year-old resident of Goodyear, Ariz., was struggling to pay the bills for his leukemia treatment. His house was under foreclosure. He had insurance through Medicaid, and yet he died after the state said it would not pay for a potentially lifesaving bone marrow transplant. Facing a \$2.6 billion budget deficit, Gov. Jan Brewer and Arizona Republicans had opted to ration care, eliminating state payments for bone marrow, liver, heart, lung and other transplants. Simultaneously, the state changed eligibility rules to cut health care for 47,000 low-income children and 310,000 low-income adults. (Ezekiel J. Emanuel, Aaron Glickman and Emily Gudbranson, 3/7)

The New York Times: No Wonder The Republicans Hid The Health Bill
Republican House leaders have spent months dodging questions about how they would replace the Affordable Care Act with a better law, and went so far as to hide the draft of their plan from other lawmakers. No wonder. The bill they released on Monday would kick millions of people off the coverage they currently have. So much for President Trump's big campaign promise: "We're going to have insurance for everybody" — with coverage that would be "much less expensive and much better."
(3/7)

Los Angeles Times: The GOP Obamacare Replacement Would Help The Rich, Hurt The Poor And Unleash Chaos
Republicans have finally released their long-awaited alternative to the Affordable Care Act. As expected, the bill would give a huge tax cut to the wealthy and gut the federal

spending that the poor and the middle class depend on for their health insurance. (Nicholas Bagley, 3/7)

Bloomberg: Republicans' Sickly Obamacare Replacement

The Republican alternative to the Obamacare is in, and the reviews are ... not good. "Dead on arrival," according to Rand Paul. "Bad policy," said the Heritage Foundation. "A train wreck waiting to happen," according to the Cato Institute. And critics on the left were hardly any kinder. (3/8)

The Washington Post: The New Republican Health-Care Plan Is Awe-Inspiringly Awful
When he was a candidate for president, Donald Trump promised that Republicans would repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with "something terrific." Now we finally have their plan, and I am sorry to report that it's something other than terrific. In fact, it's so far from terrific that there doesn't seem to be anyone other than House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) himself who thinks this bill isn't a disaster. It's being attacked not just from the left but from the right as well. Heritage Action and the Club for Growth, two groups that exist to browbeat Republicans into upholding hard-right principles, have just come out against it. (Paul Waldman, 3/7)

Los Angeles Times: The GOP Isn't Replacing All Of Obamacare — Just The Parts That Work

The House GOP leadership's proposal for repealing and replacing Obamacare would actually leave much of the 2010 Affordable Care Act intact ¶ 4 except for the parts that make it work. Instead of fixing the problems Republicans have been complaining about, it would make them worse. And rather than making insurance affordable to more people, it would raise costs for lower-income Americans and cut them for everyone else. (3/7)

Los Angeles Times: If You Thought The Obamacare Backlash Was Bad, Trumpcare Will Give Democrats A Whipping Boy For The Ages

There's a new rule in American politics: Whichever party owns healthcare will come to regret it. Seven years ago, Barack Obama's Democrats passed a health insurance law that promised to cover almost everyone and make medical care more affordable. Best of all, Obama said, the new plan wouldn't inconvenience anybody — except the high-income folks who got hit with a tax increase. (Doyle McManus, 3/7)

The Washington Post: The Republican Health-Care Plan's Top Critics? Republicans.
President Trump, long at the forefront of intellectual discovery, last week came up with a major finding: Health-care reform is hard. "Unbelievably complex," in fact. "Nobody knew that health care could be so complicated," the president said. (Dana Milbank, 3/7)

The New York Times: Why Republicans Can't Do Health Care

After the 1976 election, the Democratic Party seemed to enjoy a commanding position in American politics, with Jimmy Carter ensconced in the White House, a Senate supermajority and an advantage of nearly 150 seats in the House of Representatives. Yet over the next four years the Democrats achieved little of consequence, Carter passed into history as a failure, and Ronald Reagan ushered in a lasting rightward realignment. (Ron Douthat, 3/8)

The Washington Post: The House Republicans' Health-Care Bill Is A Thicket Of Bad Incentives

After 2,500 days, the American Health Care Act is born. Congressional Republicans' much-anticipated health-care bill may have a similar name to the Affordable Care Act it's intended to replace, but it would have a dramatically different impact. Despite President Trump's stated goals of covering at least as many people as the ACA, with more affordable policies, the plan put forward by the House on Monday would cut coverage for millions and make it more expensive for millions more. (Andy Slavitt, 3/7)

Los Angeles Times: Here's The Secret Payoff To Health Insurance CEOs Buried In The GOP Obamacare Repeal Bill

Concealed within the 123 pages of legislative verbiage and dense boilerplate of the House Republican bill repealing the Affordable Care Act are not a few hard-to-find nuggets. Here's one crying out for exposure: The bill encourages health insurance companies to pay their top executives more. It does so by removing the ACA's limit on corporate tax deductions for executive pay. The cost to the American taxpayer of eliminating this provision: well in excess of \$70 million a year. In the reckoning of the Institute for Policy Studies, a think tank that analyzed the limitation in 2014, that would have been enough that year to buy dental insurance under the ACA for 262,000 Americans, or pay the silver plan deductibles for 28,000. (Michael Hiltzik, 3/7)

Bloomberg: The Republican Health-Care Bill Is Not Designed To Actually Work

In other words, it's not exactly designed to pass and become a law that actually works. Speaker Paul Ryan might get the necessary 218 Republicans to close their eyes, hold hands, and jump over a cliff in order to get the bill to the Senate. It's still unlikely that the bill will pass in the Senate, where Republicans have a much slimmer majority. And that majority includes some senators who simply won't vote for significant cuts in Medicaid, since that would mean stripping health care away from people (voters!) who currently have it. Indeed, the bill is hardly certain to pass the House, where many Republicans want (among other things) much deeper Medicaid cuts. (Jonathan Bernstein, 3/7)

Bloomberg: GOP Gimmick On Obamacare Repeal? Ignore The Math

Republicans are playing games and using gimmicks as they struggle to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. The height of this chicanery is that two House committees are drafting the legislation without analysis of the budgetary and insurance-coverage implications other than partisan claims. An undertaking on that scale would usually have access to analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. But the CBO hasn't yet been able to score the hastily assembled legislation. And Republican leaders reportedly have not been encouraged by early discussions with the office, which is headed by Republican economist Keith Hall, who in the tradition of that job has a reputation for straight-shooting, detached analysis. (Albert R. Hunt, 3/7)

The Washington Post: The Republican Health-Care Bill Is All About Shortchanging The Poor

The American Health Care Act, introduced in the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means committees late Monday, was advertised as a bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. But the real focus of the legislation is not on health-care reform, not even on repealing the ACA as such. What the AHCA would in fact do is massively redistribute wealth from the poorest Americans to the wealthiest. (Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, 3/7)

The New York Times: Why Even Some Republicans Are Rejecting The Replacement Bill

Republicans in Congress are fond of calling Obamacare a death spiral of escalating costs and declining coverage. But their replacement plan could make those problems even worse. Tuesday, the morning after two House committees released legislation that would replace the Affordable Care Act with the American Health Care Act, the plan received a tepid, even hostile reaction from many outside conservative groups and Republicans in Congress. (Margot Sanger-Katz, 3/7)

Bloomberg: The ACA Replacement Plan Is Already Dead

The proposed bill manages to do about four things successfully: It cuts taxes for wealthy people, ends Medicaid as we know it to help pay for those tax cuts, reduces the number of Americans who can afford health insurance, and angers such a wide variety of voting constituencies that it is effectively dead on arrival. That's bad news for anyone hoping for a relatively quick and orderly transition from the ACA. But the dysfunction may actually be good news for hospitals and Medicaid-focused insurers. (Max Nisen, 3/7)

The Washington Post: The GOP's Obamacare Replacement Has Few Friends

Less than a day after it was released, the House Republicans' Obamacare replacement bill, the American Health Care Act, seems bereft of friends. Barely lifting a finger in

opposition, Democrats may enjoy the demise of the AHCA before it leaves the House. (Jennifer Rubin, 3/7)

26. Is All Health Policy Local? Regional Takes On The GOP's Health Care Blueprint

Editorial pages across the country take on how the Republican's American Health Care Act might impact their states.

Cleveland Plain Dealer: Obamacare's Flaws Could Be Repaired Far More Simply And Cheaply With A Single-Payer Plan

Replacing existing subsidies with tax credits does save the government money, but only if the credits are less than the subsidies. Getting even less help with insurance bills isn't going to make it any easier for my friends or my patients to get health care. Under the new proposal, people who benefited from Medicaid expansion would continue to have good insurance coverage, but only until 2020. After that, who knows? (Robert Needman, 3/8)

Arizona Republic: Will McCain And Flake Strip Health Care From 400,000 Arizonans?
It's still early in the replacement game for the Affordable Care Act, but not too soon to ask Sens. John McCain and Jeff Flake if they're willing to strip 400,000 Arizona citizens of their health insurance. That's what would happen if the Republican plan to scrap Obamacare eliminates the Medicaid expansion. (EJ Montini, 3/7)

Arizona Republic: Our Turn: Medicaid Expansion Is Working As Arizona Voters Envisioned

Nearly four years later, the restoration and expansion of Medicaid is working exactly as supporters said it would: Patients are getting the right care in the right place; hospital uncompensated care has been reduced dramatically; health-care employers are hiring; and taxpayers are getting more for their money. Today, Arizona's taxpayers, patients, employers and their workforce are well-served by a vibrant health-care sector that provides the highest quality care and contributes mightily to the state's economy. Anyone who wants to undo that truly doesn't know what they're doing. (Linda Hunt and Todd Sanders, 3/7)

Nashville Tennessean: Hasty Obamacare Repeal Could Strand Tennesseans
The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities states 526,000 Tennesseans could lose insurance coverage by 2019 with full ACA repeal. This will largely affect families dependent on marketplace subsidies, and will also jeopardize the 2.8 million Tennesseans who have pre-existing conditions. For patients like Shawn, that means the healthcare reform debate is truly life and death. Nearly 15 percent of adult

Tennesseans have diabetes, and medical expenses for diabetics are 2.3 times higher than those without the disease. If they are insulin dependent, how will they pay for it to live another 24 hours? (David H. Gouger, 3/7)

The Baltimore Sun: Here's What Trumpcare Means For You

The Republican plan doesn't exactly do away with the expansion of Medicaid that Maryland and about three dozen other states adopted. Doing so would have immediately cast millions off the insurance rolls. But what the GOP is proposing is actually more drastic in the long run. In Maryland, the state and federal government have traditionally split the costs of Medicaid 50-50. (In poorer states, the federal government picks up as much as 70 percent of the tab.) Under the ACA, the federal government initially covered all the costs to expand the program to people making up to 138 percent of the federal poverty line and after a phase-in period paid 90 percent. (3/7)

Lexington Herald Leader: In Health-Care Debate, Seek To Eliminate The Greater Evil
The current healthcare debate is therefore a battle between the natural rights of man versus the "common-wealth." Those who favor the former feel a younger individual should be able to choose to not purchase health insurance. This lack of preventative care can with time lead to chronic illness, which they deal with as well as they economically can. Individuals with chronic illness spiral into increasing healthcare costs and decreasing coverage until they become sufficiently disabled for government care, with those costs passed on to all taxpayers. As a surgeon in Kentucky, I have witnessed the effects of lack of coverage. (Ronald C. Burgess, 3/7)

San Antonio Press-Express: Key Facts Missing In ACA Repeal

For alleged fiscal hawks, U.S. House Republicans are acting recklessly in their haste to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. It looks as if they will be voting without any scoring by the Congressional Budget Office. This will leave factors unknown that should reasonably dictate how representatives vote — how much this replacement will cost and how many Americans will be getting coverage, how many will be getting lesser coverage and how many are stripped of coverage. (3/7)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Whatever They Call It, GOP Health Plan Is A Mandate
On Monday, House Republicans unveiled their Obamacare "replacement" plan, which they claim eliminates the individual mandate. Yet a provision of the bill allows insurance companies to increase rates by 30% on those who allow their policies to lapse but then re-apply for insurance when they need it. That sounds an awful lot like a mandate that identifies as an incentive. It is what Chicago poet Gwendolyn Brooks referred to as an

"identical disguise." And it allows the GOP to claim credit for keeping all the people who were forced to sign up for health care under Obamacare. (Christian Schneider, 3/7)

The Charlotte Observer: Obamacare Repeal Fails On Two Big Fronts
Fewer Americans will have health insurance if the Republican alternative to the Affordable Care Act is enacted. That's the crucial takeaway from the American Health Care Act, because it goes to the heart of the health and financial stability of everyday Americans. The consensus from analysts from both sides of the political divide is 10 million or more people will lose coverage under the plan, reversing a trend from the past few years that saw the nation reach its lowest uninsured rate ever. (3/7)

27. Viewpoints: Planned Parenthood 'Grandstanding'; The Challenges Of Addressing Infant Mortality

A selection of opinions from around the country.

The Washington Post: Stop The Grandstanding On Planned Parenthood
It's pretty clear that a proposal floated by the White House to safeguard federal funding to Planned Parenthood if the group stopped providing abortions never stood a chance of even being considered by the group. "Non-negotiable," said one Planned Parenthood official. But the fact that the idea was broached at all is significant as the latest sign that Republicans recognize the problems — and likely political repercussions — of cutting off funds to an organization that is held in high regard by the American public for providing critical health-care services. (3/7)

Arizona Republic: Punishing Planned Parenthood By Killing Women?
During one of the presidential debates candidate Donald Trump said, "Millions and millions of women — cervical cancer, breast cancer — are helped by Planned Parenthood. I would defund it because I'm pro-life, but millions of women are helped by Planned Parenthood." That muddled logic is now public policy. Trump and the Republicans rewriting the health care law are willing to kill women in order to punish Planned Parenthood. (EJ Montini, 3/7)

The Charlotte Observer: Pro-Life? Do These 3 Things Instead Of Harassing Women
I am writing on behalf of Pro-Choice Charlotte as an appeal to abortion protesters participating in the 40-week Love Life prayer walk outside A Preferred Women's Health Clinic in Charlotte that started last weekend. While the stated purpose of Love Life Charlotte is "to create a culture of love and life that will bring an end to abortion," please reconsider whether shaming, intimidating and harassing women arriving at the clinic is the best way to show love and compassion. You may not intend for the marching,

shouting and posters to cause psychological distress, but this is the effect you have on many women. Not only does this not demonstrate love or respect for your fellow human, it is also not an effective way to reduce the number of abortions. I would like to offer three alternatives. (Brooke Adams, 3/7)

The Columbus Dispatch: Infant Mortality Has No Easy Fix
Sometimes reality presents us with two sets of facts that exist simultaneously, yet seem impossible to reconcile. Such is the case of a recent groundbreaking medical procedure at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the latest news about the effort to curb the Franklin County's appalling infant mortality rate. (3/8)

RealClear Health: No Doubt About It: Smokefree Laws Cut Heart Attacks In Big Way
There is strong and consistent evidence that exposure to secondhand smoke causes heart attacks and that smokefree workplace and public place laws cut heart attacks (and other diseases). The most recent evidence comes from a large study in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where heart attack deaths dropped by 12 percent following implementation of its smokefree law. (Stanton Glantz, 3/7)

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The Latest

March 22, 2017

The Latest from the Kaiser Family Foundation

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- Premiums and Tax Credits Under the Affordable Care Act vs. the American Health Care Act: Interactive Maps (News Release, Interactive)
- Web Briefing for Journalists – Potential Changes to Health Care Access and Coverage: What's at Stake for Women (Webcast)
- Ten Ways That Repealing and Replacing the Affordable Care Act Could Affect Women (News Release, Issue Brief)
- KHN Stories:
 - KHN On Call: Answers To Questions On Tax Credits, Penalties And Age Ratings (Story)
 - On Medicaid Money, GOP Has Win-Or-Lose Proposition For States (Story)
 - Medicaid Caps Pitched By GOP Could Shrink Seniors' Benefits (California Healthline Story)
 - GOP Scraps Individual Mandate But Sets Up New Penalty For Those Skipping Coverage (Story)
 - In Deep-Red Western N.C., Revered Congressman Leads Charge Against GOP Bill (Story)
 - Prescription Drug Costs Are On The Rise; So Are The TV Ads Promoting Them (Story)
 - Low-Income AIDS Patients Fear Coverage Gains May Slip Away (Story)
 - A Young Man With Parkinson's Frets Over The Affordability Of GOP Health Plan (Story)

- Trump's Promise To Rein In Drug Prices Could Open Floodgate To Importation Laws (Story)
- GAO To Launch Investigation Of FDA's Orphan Drug Program (Story)
- California's Republican Members Of Congress Face Quandary Over Health Bill (California Healthline Story)
- I Do ... Take You To Be My Lawfully Covered Health Care Dependent (Story)
- Report: Fired U.S. Attorney Was Probing Tom Price's Stock Trades (Story)
- House Republicans Recycle Controversial 2003 Bill To Boost Small-Business Insurance (Story)
- Travel Ban Adds Stress To 'Match Week' For Some Doctors (Story)
- Latest news summaries from the KHN Morning Briefing
- What Could a Medicaid Per Capita Cap Mean for Low-Income People on Medicare? (News Release, Issue Brief)
- What Is at Stake for Health and Health Care Disparities Under ACA Repeal? (Issue Brief)
- Medicaid Enrollment of New Eligibles in Expansion States, by Party Affiliation of Governor (Slide)
- New State Data:
 - Cases of Zika Virus in the United States (New State Data)
 - 2017 Marketplace Open Enrollment Data (New State Data)
 - State Sex and HIV Education Policy (New State Data)
 - Minors' Authority to Consent to STI Services (New State Data)
- Latest news summaries from the Kaiser Daily Global Health Policy Report

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KHN First Edition KAISER HEALTH NEWS

Friday, March 24, 2017

Check Kaiser Health News online for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

Kaiser Health News: Late Move To Dump 'Essential' Benefits Could Strand Chronically Ill

A last-minute attempt by conservative Republicans to dump standards for health benefits in plans sold to individuals would probably lower the average consumer's upfront insurance costs, such as premiums and deductibles, said experts on both sides of the debate to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. But, they add, it will likely also induce insurers to offer much skimpier plans, potentially excluding the gravely ill, and putting consumers at greater financial risk if they need care. (Hancock, 3/24)

Kaiser Health News: Popular Guarantee For Young Adults' Coverage May Be Health Law's Achilles' Heel

The Affordable Care Act struck a popular chord by allowing adult children to obtain health coverage through a parent's plan until their 26th birthday. ... The policy has proven to be a double-edged sword for the ACA's online health exchanges because it has funneled young, healthy customers away from the overall marketplace "risk pool." Insurers need those customers to balance out the large numbers of enrollees with chronic illnesses who drive up insurers' costs — and ultimately contribute to higher marketplace premiums. (Heredia Rodriguez, 3/24)

The New York Times: Trump Tells G.O.P. It's Now Or Never, Demanding House Vote On Health Bill

President Trump issued an ultimatum on Thursday to recalcitrant Republicans to fall in line behind a broad health insurance overhaul or see their opportunity to repeal the

Affordable Care Act vanish, demanding a Friday vote on a bill that appeared to lack a majority to pass. (Hirschfeld Davis, Pear and Kaplan, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Trump Says If Vote on Health-Care Bill Fails, Obamacare Stays

Republicans prepared to take a high-stakes gamble Friday, when they are expected to bring to the House floor—at President Donald Trump's urging—a GOP bill to replace the Affordable Care Act without knowing whether the vote will produce a victory or an embarrassing defeat. ... The decision to bring the bill to the floor appeared to put an end to days of negotiations, amounting to a calculation that lawmakers would view the vote as a do-or-die moment and opt to follow through on campaign promises to replace former President Barack Obama's signature legislation with a more conservative alternative. (Peterson, Hughes and Radnofsky, 3/24)

The Washington Post: Trump Delivers Ultimatum To House Republicans: Pass Health-Care Measure On Friday Or He'll Move On

For Trump, who campaigned as a skilled negotiator capable of forging a good deal on behalf of Americans, it could either vindicate or undercut one of his signature claims. If the measure fails, it would be a defeat for Trump in his first effort to help pass major legislation and it may also jeopardize other items on his wish list, including a tax overhaul and infrastructure spending. Defeat would also mean that Obamacare — something that congressional Republicans have railed against for seven years — would remain in place. (DeBonis and Eilperin, 3/23)

Los Angeles Times: Trump Threatens To Leave Obamacare In Place If GOP Bill Fails

It remained unclear whether Trump's extraordinary ultimatum was real or a pressure tactic designed to bring unruly Republicans in line. Despite personal appeals from the president and a flurry of last-minute negotiations with House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), wary GOP lawmakers remained unconvinced, leaving leaders shy of the votes needed to advance the legislation. (Mascaro and Levey, 3/23)

NPR: Trump Ultimatum For House GOP: Vote On Health Bill Or Obamacare Stands

Trump, famous for his deal-making abilities, has tried to woo both unhappy factions of the GOP conference with little success. No consensus was reached during a meeting with the president and the roughly 40 members of the House Freedom Caucus at the White House earlier Thursday. Vice President Pence met with the maybe two dozen moderates in the so-called Tuesday Group, many of whom are also opposed to the bill. (Montanaro and Taylor, 3/23)

The Associated Press: House Sets Risky Health Care Vote After Trump Demands It

In a gamble with monumental political stakes, Republicans set course for a climactic House vote on their health care overhaul after President Donald Trump claimed he was finished negotiating with GOP holdouts and determined to pursue the rest of his agenda, win or lose. House Speaker Paul Ryan set the showdown for Friday, following a nighttime Capitol meeting at which top White House officials told GOP lawmakers that Trump had decided the time for talk was over. (Fram and Alonso-Zaldivar, 3/24)

USA Today: Damn The Torpedoes: GOP Sets Friday Vote On Health Care Despite Opposition

Rep. Chris Collins, R-N.Y., told reporters at the Capitol that Mulvaney's message was: "The president needs this, the president has said he wants a vote tomorrow. If for any reason (it fails) we're just going to move forward with additional parts of his agenda. This is our moment in time but the president is insisting on a vote one way or the other." Collins said the message from the administration — Stephen Bannon, Reince Priebus and Kellyanne Conway also attended the meeting — was that negotiations were over and it was time to act. (Kelly, Collins and Shesgreen, 3/23)

Politico: Trump Demands Friday Vote On Health Care Plan

The move by Trump and Ryan is an enormous gamble, setting up a real cliffhanger when the legislation hits the floor on Friday. ... A loss on the House floor would be a glaring embarrassment for the new president and House speaker — one that could undermine other parts of the GOP legislative agenda, including tax reform. A victory, on the other hand, would provide not just a shot of badly-needed momentum for both men, but undermine the House Freedom Caucus, the group of conservative hard-liners who've fought the GOP health care plan because it doesn't go far enough. (Bade, Cheney and Dawsey, 3/23)

Reuters: Trump Demands Support In Do-Or-Die Friday Vote On Healthcare Plan

U.S. President Donald Trump warned House Republican lawmakers that he will leave Obamacare in place and move on to tax reform if they do not get behind new healthcare legislation and support it in a vote on Friday. It was not clear late on Thursday evening that Trump and the Republican leaders who crafted the bill had enough support to pass it, meaning they now risk defeat in their first attempt at major legislation and may fail to deliver on a key campaign pledge. (Cornwell and Becker, 3/24)

The New York Times: Trump The Dealmaker Projects Bravado, But Behind The Scenes, Faces Rare Self-Doubt

President Trump, the author of "The Art of the Deal," has been projecting his usual

bravado in public this week about the prospects of repealing the Affordable Care Act. Privately he is grappling with rare bouts of self-doubt. Mr. Trump has told four people close to him that he regrets going along with Speaker Paul D. Ryan's plan to push a health care overhaul before unveiling a tax cut proposal more politically palatable to Republicans. (Thrush and Haberman, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Health Vote's Outcome Carries High Stakes For Trump Presidency

The health-care bill now stalled in Congress is proving an early test of whether the deal-making skills that made President Donald Trump rich in the business world will also work in the legislative realm, where lawmakers face competing pressures and require different sorts of incentives to reach agreement. (Nicholas, Lee and Radnofsky, 3/23)

Politico: Delayed Vote A Setback For Trump The Dealmaker

"The closer,? D it turns out, needs extra innings. ... The final straw for a Thursday deal was a lengthy White House meeting between Trump, his top lieutenants and the hardliner House Freedom Caucus, a group of conservatives who have pushed to strip requirements that insurance companies provide standard benefits such as maternity care in coverage plans. They couldn't reach a deal, forcing the White House into a one-by-one effort to turn votes that one senior administration official described as "grinding." (Goldmacher, Dawsey and Palmeri, 3/23)

USA Today: The House Health Care Battle: What's At Stake?

The House battle on overhauling health care represents the first major legislative test since Americans put Republicans in charge of Washington last November. ... The House vote on the bill, which still would need to pass the Senate, could presage how future legislative battles will play out and has ramifications far beyond health care. Here's what's at stake. (Slack and Korte, 3/22)

Politico: Trump Vs. The Freedom Caucus

The House Freedom Caucus has threatened to tank the House GOP Obamacare replacement bill unless they get what they want. But Trump is now calling their bluff. White House officials told members of the group on Thursday they have one shot: If they help defeat the American Health Care Act, the Trump administration is going to move on — meaning the Freedom Caucus could be pinned with actually saving Obamacare. The White House is betting that they will cave, given that saving Obamacare is something these conservative Republicans will never be able to stomach. (Bade and Bresnahan, 3/23)

The Associated Press: New Congress, All-GOP, Same Political Divisions

With control of the White House and Senate and a commanding majority in the House, Republicans were supposed to brush off any challenge from the hardline Freedom Caucus and work their will with impunity. But something happened on the way to governing. Now, House Republican leaders are struggling with the same divisions that plagued them under President Barack Obama. (Ohlemacher, 3/24)

Politico: How The GOP Could Still Salvage The Obamacare Repeal

House Republican leaders scrambling to buck up wavering members had portrayed the vote as the only shot to eliminate the GOP's longtime boogeyman — and as an essential show of support for President Donald Trump. But in fact, they have several options to salvage the repeal effort after they couldn't muster 215 votes on Thursday. (Cancryn, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: In Health-Law Fight, GOP Leaders Struggle To Reconcile Factions

After years of making the repeal of the Affordable Care Act a signature issue, Republicans are struggling to deliver on the promise, floundering amid warring factions that neither President Donald Trump nor House Speaker Paul Ryan have been able to whip into line. ... They are confronting a thorny challenge that required two things in short supply among today's Republican rank and file: a willingness to compromise or to defer to leadership. (Hook and Epstein, 3/23)

Politico: Trump's Obamacare Repeal Concessions Likely Can't Pass Senate

Democrats say they are certain they can kill any language in the repeal bill that erases Obamacare's mandate for minimum benefits in insurance plans. And top Republicans are making no promise that the last-ditch changes to win over conservatives will fly in the more centrist Senate, which is beginning to write its own health care plan. (Everett and Haberkorn, 3/23)

The Washington Post: Health-Care Overhaul Faces An Even Bigger Challenge In The Senate

Even if the House approves a GOP effort this week to repeal and replace key parts of the Affordable Care Act, the work of persuading the Senate to do the same is likely to be even harder. (Sullivan and Snell, 3/23)

NPR: Republican Health Bill Could Remove Pre-Existing Condition Protections

When House Speaker Paul Ryan says he wants to repeal the Affordable Care Act so that people can buy insurance that's right for them, and not something created in Washington, part of what he's saying is that he wants to get rid of so-called essential

health benefits. That's a list of 10 general categories of medical care that all insurance policies are required to cover under the Affordable Care Act. Getting rid of that requirement, or trimming it, is central to the Republican strategy, because they say those benefits drive up insurance premiums so much that healthy people won't buy coverage. (Kodjak, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Basic-Services Requirement Is At Heart Of Health-Insurance Split

At the heart of the last-minute negotiations over the House GOP health-care bill is a pillar of the Affordable Care Act: the requirement that most insurance policies cover a basic set of health services, including such items as maternity and mental-health care. Repealing that requirement, as many conservatives want, would topple a core element of the ACA that sought to protect patients from the high cost of using a health service not covered by their insurance. (Armour, 3/23)

Los Angeles Times: Obamacare 101: 4 Things You Need To Know About 'Essential Health' Benefits

Among the most important — and little understood — new insurance rules put in place by the Affordable Care Act was a requirement that health plans cover a basic set of benefits. The requirement was part of a package of new consumer protections in the healthcare law, including a prohibition on insurers denying coverage to people with preexisting medical conditions and bans on annual- or lifetime-limits on coverage, which were once common. (Levey, 3/23)

USA Today: Critics: GOP Health Plan Risky For Mental Health, Addiction Progress

House Republicans' Affordable Care Act replacement plan would dramatically change who is eligible for free or low-cost health coverage, which critics fear could drastically slash mental health and addiction coverage, which many people got for the first time under the law. (O'Donnell, 3/23)

USA Today: Dropping Obamacare's 'Essential' Benefits Impacts More Than Mammograms

Eliminating required health insurance benefits, a move discussed as part of the Republican move to repeal the Affordable Care Act, also threatens to kill the ACA's annual and lifetime limits on patients' costs, which was enacted to prevent bankruptcies due to medical costs. The limits on out of pocket costs only apply to the ACA-required 10 essential health benefits, which include prescription drugs and hospital care. So eliminating the benefit requirement makes the limits "essentially meaningless," says health care legal expert Tim Jost. (O'Donnell, 3/23)

The Washington Post: 'I Wouldn't Want To Lose My Mammograms,' Male GOP Senator Says — Then Immediately Regrets

It's a common question among those decrying the cost of health insurance: Why should you have to purchase a plan that covers procedures you won't ever need? Especially if, say, you're a guy, and your plan covers maternity care — as Obamacare requires most plans sold through an exchange to do? It's also a philosophy in conservative circles gaining momentum as Republicans try to deconstruct Obamacare, (Phillips, 3/23)

The Washington Post: CBO: Latest House GOP Health-Care Bill Would Mean As Many Uninsured By 2026

Changes that House Republicans have made to their health-care legislation would reduce savings in federal spending by half as much as their original plan and would still cause 24 million more Americans to be uninsured, according to congressional budget analysts. (Goldstein, 3/23)

The New York Times: C.B.O. Update: Health Bill Amendments Will Cost More But Not Insure More

A revised version of the Republican health care bill being considered by Congress would leave 24 million more Americans uninsured by 2026, like the original bill, but would reduce the deficit by half as much, according to a new report by the Congressional Budget Office. (Davis, Popovich and Patel, 3/23)

Politico: CBO: Revisions To GOP Health Plan Add To Deficit Without Improving Coverage

House GOP leaders' amended Obamacare repeal bill would cost billions more — without covering more people, according to a new report by the CBO. The slate of changes offered by House GOP leaders this week as they sought more support for their bill to partly repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act would cost \$186 billion more over 10 years compared to their initial version, according to a 10-page report from the nonpartisan scorekeeper. (Ferris, 3/23)

The Washington Post: This Is The Problem With Delaying A Vote On Republicans' Health-Care Bill

This CBO score is one of the reasons Republicans' last-minute delay on a planned Thursday vote on the bill is so damaging for their already slim chances of getting something passed: It gives every side opposed to this bill 4 and there are many — more time to digest what they hate most about it. (Phillips, 3/23)

The Associated Press: Republican Health Bill Would Widen America's Big Wealth Gap

House Republicans' health care bill provides massive tax cuts to the wealthy while

increasing taxes for many lower income families, adding to America's big income gap between the rich and everyone else. Over the past quarter century, only one group of people has seen significant increases in income — those at the very top. Families in the middle or at the bottom of the economic ladder have seen little or no increase in wages. ... The GOP health bill exacerbates those disparities, according to a new report by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. On average, taxes would go down for families making more than \$50,000 a year, while taxes would increase for many families making less, the report said. (Ohlemacher, 3/23)

Reuters: Uncertain Fate Of Obamacare Causes Some Hospitals To Halt Projects, Hiring

Uncertainty surrounding the Republican plan to replace Obamacare is forcing some U.S. hospitals to delay expansion plans, cut costs, or take on added risk to borrow money for capital investment projects, dealing an economic blow to these facilities and the towns they call home. (Respaut and Abutaleb, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: House GOP Super PAC Pulls Support From Iowa Congressman Who Opposes GOP Health Bill

The super PAC overseen by House Speaker Paul Ryan and the House GOP leadership is yanking support from a House Republican who pledged to oppose the health-care legislation pushed by President Donald Trump and House GOP leadership. The Congressional Leadership Fund is pulling staff from and closing an office it opened last month in Iowa Rep. David Young's Des Moines-based district. (Epstein, 3/23)

Reuters: Obamacare Supporters Rally Against Congressional Repeal Efforts

Supporters of Obamacare staged rallies across the country on Thursday denouncing efforts by President Donald Trump and Republican congressional leaders to repeal the landmark law that has extended medical insurance coverage to some 20 million Americans. Hundreds of demonstrators turned out in Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles marking the seventh anniversary of enactment of Obamacare, as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has become widely known. (Simpson, 3/23)

Politico: As Repeal Vote Nears, Obama Pleads To Preserve Affordable Care Act

Former President Barack Obama, who has remained on the sidelines for much of the contentious debate surrounding the Trump administration's plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, urged lawmakers Thursday to preserve and build on his signature legislative achievement. The lengthy statement ... celebrated the merits of Obamacare and described the legislation as a watershed moment in determining that health care is "not just a privilege for a few, but a right for everybody." (Sutton, 3/23)

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KHN Morning Briefing

KAISER HEALTH NEWS

Wednesday, April 05, 2017

Check Kaiser Health News online for the latest headlines

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From Kaiser Health News:

KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Where There's Willingness, There's A Way For Congress And Trump To Fix Health Law

After the collapse of the Republican replacement plan, there may be a way to find consensus and repair the law. (Julie Rovner, 4/4)

2. 'It's Not Like Other States': High-Cost Alaska Sits In The Eye Of Health Reform Storm

With the most expensive medical care and health insurance premiums in the nation, Alaska seeks a novel way to bail out Obamacare. (JoNel Aleccia, 4/5)

3. For Better Or Worse, Trump And GOP Now Own Health Care

More than six in 10 people think that moving forward the responsibility for dealing with the health law falls to President Donald Trump and Republicans controlling Congress, Kaiser Family Foundation poll finds. (Julie Rovner, 4/4)

4. In Pain? Many Doctors Say Opioids Are Not The Answer

The opioid addiction crisis has led to a crackdown on prescriptions for chronic pain patients, who are increasingly given less addictive painkillers along with referrals for acupuncture, physical therapy, massage and even yoga. (Emily Bazar, 4/5)

5. Political Cartoon: 'It's A 10'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'It's A 10'" by Dave Coverly, Speed Bump.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

HEY REPUBLICANS... OBAMACARE IS YOURS NOW

Who has ownership?
A new poll offers insights
On what people think.

- Anonymous

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

HEALTH LAW

6. White House Tacks Right On Health Plan To Woo Conservatives, Jeopardizing Support From Moderates

Talks on Tuesday to get House Freedom Caucus members on board with a Republican health bill ended without any solid guarantees.

The New York Times: Ceding To One Side On Health Bill, Trump Risks Alienating Another

The White House stepped up its push on Tuesday to revive legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act by placating the most conservative House members, but the effort risked alienating more moderate Republicans whose votes President Trump needs just as much. Vice President Mike Pence met for about two hours on Tuesday night with lawmakers, including leaders of three groups of House Republicans. But lawmakers leaving the conclave in the basement of the Capitol said that no deal had been reached and that talks would continue on Wednesday. (Pear and Kaplan, 4/4)

Reuters: More Talks But No Decisions On Republican Push To Overhaul Healthcare
The lack of a resolution complicates a White House push for a House vote on a healthcare proposal before Friday, when lawmakers return to their districts for two weeks. "Good talk, good progress," Pence told reporters without providing details. Freedom Caucus leader Mark Meadows said the meeting had focused on an amendment to create a "backstop" to ensure individuals with chronic illnesses in high-risk pools do not see spikes in insurance premium costs if other aspects of Obamacare, also known as the 2010 Affordable Care Act, are repealed. (Morgan and Abutaleb, 4/5)

The Washington Post: Republicans Try To Revive Health-Care Effort As Leaders Seek To Temper Expectations

The crux of the new proposal would be to allow states to seek exemptions from certain mandates established under the Affordable Care Act — including a requirement that insurers cover 10 "essential health benefits" as well as a prohibition on charging those with preexisting medical conditions more than the healthy. While the largely behind-the-scenes effort generated optimistic talk, no clear path has emerged toward House passage of the Republican bill. On Tuesday evening, key players said they were still waiting to see new proposals in writing, and some lawmakers said they were wary of rushing the process. (DeBonis and Wagner, 4/4)

Politico: Latest Repeal Bid May Gut One Of Obamacare's Most Popular Provisions
Conservatives= 2 latest Obamacare repeal proposal amounts to a sneak attack on one of the health care law's most popular safeguards for people with pre-existing conditions. White House officials and members of the House Freedom Caucus are discussing giving states the option of a waiver from a key Obamacare protection — called community rating — as part of their last-ditch effort to revive the repeal effort. (Haberkorn, 4/4)

Politico: Pence's Obamacare Diplomacy Fails To Yield A Deal

Pence told hard-line Freedom Caucus members Monday night that changes to the bill would allow governors to opt out of Obamacare's "community rating" provision, which prohibits insurers from charging higher premiums to people who are sick, are older or based on their gender. Without it, insurers could charge more to people with cancer or other medical conditions, though supporters say it would drive down premiums for healthy people. Meadows said they were told governors would be allowed to opt out for "all community ratings with the exception of gender." But moderate GOP members who met with Pence the same day say they were under the impression that governors would only receive "community rating" flexibility based on a person's age — not their illness or other factors. (Bade and Dawsey, 4/5)

The Hill: Centrists Push Back On New ObamaCare Repeal Plan

But the attempt to move the bill further to the right threatens to erode support among moderate members who were turned off by the previous version of the American Health Care Act. "While we haven't picked up any votes yet, this concept is already showing signs of losing a ton of them," a senior Republican source said. (Sullivan and Hellmann, 4/4)

The Associated Press: White House Effort To Revive Health Bill Gets Mixed Reaction
At the White House, Pence said he and President Donald Trump "remain confident that working with the Congress we will repeal and replace Obamacare." But there was no evidence that the proposal won over any GOP opponents who'd forced Trump and party leaders to beat an unceremonious retreat on their bill on March 24, when they canceled a House vote that was doomed to failure. (Fram, 4/4)

Los Angeles Times: White House And GOP Aim For Do-Over Of Failed Obamacare Repeal, But Chances For Agreement Are Slim

[C]hances remain slim that Republican leaders can build consensus among the GOP factions — the conservative House Freedom Caucus and more centrist Tuesday Group — that doomed the last effort. House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) lowered expectations that a deal could be struck soon. "Look, the president would like to see this done," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer told reporters during an off-camera briefing Tuesday. "I'm not going to raise expectations," Spicer said. "But I think that there are more and more people coming to the table with more and more ideas about [how] to grow that vote." (Mascaro and Bierman, 4/4)

CQ Roll Call: Ryan: Revived Health Care Talks In Preliminary Stages

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan on Tuesday cast doubt on the possibility that the chamber would vote this week on a revised bill to repeal and replace the 2010 health law. While the Wisconsin Republican noted there are ongoing conversations among lawmakers regarding potential changes to the legislation (HR 1628), he cautioned that those discussions were still in the conceptual stage. "We don't have bill text or an agreement yet, but these are the kinds of conversations we want," Ryan told reporters following a closed-door House GOP conference meeting. "That is not to say that we are ready to go because we want to make sure that when we go we have the votes to pass this bill." (Williams, 4/4)

The Hill: Ryan Tamps Down Expectations For New ObamaCare Repeal Bill

When asked if there will be a health vote by the end of the week, Ryan said he didn't know. "I don't want to put some kind of artificial deadline because we're at that conceptual stage," Ryan said. "We have very productive conversations occurring

with our members. But those are productive conversations; it doesn't mean we have language and text that's ready to go and the votes are lined up." (Wong, 4/4)

The Wall Street Journal: GOP Talks To Relaunch Health Law Sputter
Even if members of the Freedom Caucus were to reach an agreement with the administration, GOP leaders would still need to shore up support among more centrist House Republicans who have objected to some of the changes sought by conservatives. "That would not move me to the 'yes' column," said Rep. Leonard Lance (R., N.J.), who said he favored retaining the requirement that most insurers offer specific health benefits such as maternity care or hospitalization. (Peterson and Andrews, 4/5)

Bloomberg: House GOP Cools To Revised Health Measure Pushed By White House
Jim Renacci, a Republican member of the Ways and Means Committee, had supported the previous version of the measure, which was pulled from a floor vote, despite some reservations about its contents. Now he says he's withholding support until he sees the outlines of the most recent changes, which were presented to some members Monday night by Vice President Mike Pence. "I'm a big believer in the process, I'm a big believer in hearings, I'm a big believer in having the authorizing committees to have the opportunities, as well as members from outside, to hear what's going on, and that process will actually bring a better resolution," Renacci said. "We have actually broken that process, with no hearings." (Edgerton and House, 4/4)

Politico: Trump's New Obamacare Repeal Push Faces Tough Slog In Congress
White House officials privately said they don't expect a deal anytime soon on health care. That's despite direct entreaties from some of the White House's heaviest hitters — Vice President Mike Pence, chief of staff Reince Priebus and budget director Mick Mulvaney — who are darting between the Capitol and the West Wing to meet with conservatives and centrists to test the chances for reviving the so-called American Health Care Act. (Cheney, Bade and Dawsey, 4/4)

Bloomberg: Trump White House Sells New Health Plan As GOP Seeks Details
Republicans have little space on the calendar to hold a new vote this month. They are scheduled to begin a two-week recess on Friday, and when they return they will have five days to pass a spending measure to keep the government funded after April 28. (Edgerton, John, House and Sink, 4/4)

NPR: House Freedom Caucus In Talks With White House To Revive Health Care Bill, With Few Signs Of Life
The same firebrand conservatives who helped derail the GOP's long-awaited legislation to repeal and replace key parts of the Affordable Care Act are now trying to breathe

new life into the bill with a long shot effort to bring it back for a vote in May. Or at least keep it on life support through the two-week April recess when they'll otherwise have to explain the bill's derailment back home. "We're on the eve of going home and spending two weeks with our constituents ... and they know they're going to get questions about this," said Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark. "And for the people who were 'no' they'll have justification to deal with." (Davis, 4/4)

Politico Pro: Health Groups Pan GOP's Latest Obamacare Repeal Effort
Powerful health industry groups shut out of the first failed GOP Obamacare repeal effort say the second version will collapse even faster. (Cancryn and Demko, 4/4)

Reuters: Hospital Stocks Fall After Talk Of Health Bill Revival
Shares of U.S. hospital operators dropped on Tuesday as Republicans sought to revive plans to dismantle the Affordable Care Act that has benefited the companies. Shares of HCA Holdings, the largest publicly traded hospital operator, fell 3.2 percent, while Tenet Healthcare was off 4.8 percent and Community Health Systems dropped 6.3 percent. (Krauskopf, 4/4)

7. A Missed Opportunity? Republicans Didn't Court The Democrats Who Opposed ACA In 2010

There are three Democrats still in office who voted "no" on the Affordable Care Act, but they say Republicans didn't reach out to them.

Roll Call: House Democrats Who Opposed Obamacare Say Trump Never Approached Them

"We had no votes from the Democrats. They weren't going to give us a single vote, so it's a very difficult thing to do," lamented President Donald Trump to reporters about 90 minutes after House Speaker Paul D. Ryan canceled the floor vote on the Republicans' health care bill on March 24. But if Trump wanted Democrats, why didn't he approach those who= 2d opposed President Barack Obama's signature health care law in 2010? (Curry, 4/5)

Meanwhile, KHN looks at what could happen to the health law with bipartisan support —

Kaiser Health News: Where There's Willingness, There's A Way For Congress And Trump To Fix Health Law
Now that the GOP effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act is in limbo, is there a way to make it work better? Democrats and Republicans don't agree on much

when it comes to the controversial federal health law, but some party leaders from each side of the aisle agree it needs repairs. (Rovner, 4/4)

8. For Young People, Health Care Is A 'Right' That Government Should Pay More To Ensure

A GenForward poll shows young people support the Affordable Care Act and think the government should be responsible for making sure Americans have coverage. Other polls also take the country's temperature on health care.

The Associated Press: Poll: Most Young People Say Gov't Should Pay For Health Care
Most young Americans want any health care overhaul under President Donald Trump to look a lot like the Affordable Care Act signed into law by his predecessor, President Barack Obama. But there's one big exception: A majority of young Americans dislike "Obamacare's" requirement that all Americans buy insurance or pay a fine. (Kellman and Swanson, 4/5)

The Hill: Gallup: ObamaCare Has Majority Support For First Time
More than half of Americans approve of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), according to a Gallup poll out Tuesday, marking the first time the law has gained majority support since Gallup began tracking public opinion on it in 2012. Fifty-five percent of Americans say that former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare reform law should remain in place, though 40 percent say it needs significant changes. Still, the new rate is up significantly from November, when only 42 percent said they approved of the law. (Greenwood, 4/4)

The Hill: Poll: Most Want Trump To Try To Make ObamaCare Work
A vast majority of Americans want the Trump administration to try to find a way to save ObamaCare, according to a new poll released Tuesday. The Kaiser Health Tracking Poll found that 75 percent respondents said the current administration "should do what they can" to make the healthcare law functional. Only 19 percent of responders said President Trump should do what it can to make the law fail. (Vladimirov, 4/4)

Kaiser Health News: For Better Or Worse, Trump And GOP Now Own Health Care
Ownership of the Affordable Care Act has officially been transferred from President Barack Obama and Democrats in Congress to President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans, according to a new poll. In the monthly tracking poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation, 61 percent of respondents said any problems with the law moving forward are the responsibility of Trump and Republicans in Congress, while

only 31 percent said future problems are the fault of the Democrats who passed it. (Rovner, 4/4)

9. Georgia Health Law Marketplace Could Be Rocked If Blue Cross' Parent Company Pulls Out

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Anthem Inc., the parent company of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia, "is leaning toward exiting a high percentage" of regions it participates in, which could leave a vacuum of coverage for the state. Meanwhile, Iowa's insurance commissioner says no one should panic just because Wellmark has announced it won't be selling individual plans for 2018.

Georgia Health News: Anthem Talk Of Pullout Puts A Cloud Over ACA Exchanges
Is Georgia's health insurance exchange heading for another big insurer pullout? A research report last week indicated that the parent company of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia may be moving toward withdrawing from a large percentage of exchange markets nationally. (Miller, 4/4)

Iowa Public Radio: Iowa Insurance Commissioner Urges Calm After Wellmark Leaves ACA Market

Iowa's insurance commissioner is urging customers with individual health insurance policies to stay calm after Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield decided to stop selling individual plans. Insurance Commissioner Doug Ommen said he is disappointed with Wellmark's decision. It affects more than 21,000 Iowans who bought individual Obamacare-compliant plans from Wellmark after the start of 2014. Those customers will have to find a new insurance plan for 2018. (Sostaric, 4/4)

And in other news on the health law —

Kaiser Health News: 'It's Not Like Other States': High-Cost Alaska Sits In The Eye Of Health Reform Storm

The [GOP] bill's failure left Obamacare intact while Republicans regroup on how to address rising insurance costs and other weaknesses with health care delivery. The issues are particularly acute in Alaska, the fourth most expensive state in the U.S., where a standard knee replacement might cost five times what it does in Seattle and pricey air ambulance rides are common in emergencies. Individual health insurance premiums here climbed almost 40 percent annually after the ACA went into

effect, and high health care costs drove all but one provider, Premiera Blue Cross Blue Shield, out of the market in 2017. (Aleccia, 4/5)

10. Kansas Health Industry, Patient Advocates 'Not Ready To Give Up Yet' On Medicaid Expansion

After coming so close to moving the state to "yes" on expanding its Medicaid program, activists say they will be back to continue the fight. Also, North Carolina Democrats and advocates renew their push for expansion.

Stat: Kansas Activists Vow To Keep Fighting To Expand Medicaid

The failed veto override also crushed hospital executives and community clinic directors who had hoped against hope for a Medicaid expansion, which would have brought in a flood of federal dollars to help pay for the care they now often deliver for free. The expansion would have covered an estimated 150,000 Kansans. ...When he vetoed expansion [of] the Medicaid expansion late last month, Governor Sam Brownback said the proposal was riddled with flaws: "I am vetoing this expansion of Obamacare because it fails to serve the truly vulnerable before the able-bodied, lacks work requirements to help able-bodied Kansans escape poverty, and burdens the state budget with unrestrainable entitlement costs." (Martin, 4/4)

WRAL (Raleigh, N.C.): Calls To Expand Medicaid Renewed

Democratic legislators and left-leaning health care advocacy groups again called Tuesday for the General Assembly to move forward with Medicaid expansion. Sen. Floyd McKissick, D-Durham, Sen. Erica Smith-Ingram, D-Northampton, and Health Action North Carolina, an organization comprised of grassroots and health care-related advocacy groups, said the legislature should move forward with Medicaid expansion in the wake of Congress' recent failure to repeal the Affordable Care Act. (Nunn, 4/4)

Meanwhile, in other Medicaid news —

Indianapolis Star: Medicaid Smokers Cost Indiana \$540 Million A Year

Most people know that smokers rack up higher healthcare costs than non-smokers do. But the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation wanted to know just how much more smokers on Medicaid cost the state of Indiana. The answer? More than half a billion dollars. (Rudavsky, 4/5)

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

11. Gottlieb's Deep Resume Means He Can Hit Ground Running, But It's Also What Has Opponents Concerned

Dr. Scott Gottlieb, President Donald Trump's pick to head the Food and Drug Administration, will be grilled on his ties to the industry at a confirmation hearing on Wednesday.

Stat: With A Resume That's Both Asset And Liability, Scott Gottlieb Preps For FDA Confirmation Hearing

Dr. Scott Gottlieb has been preparing for this job his whole life. He's a physician and a conservative policy wonk. He's been a federal regulator scrutinizing new drugs. He's a writer. An investor. And a consultant: He's made a lot of money advising biopharma executives on how to get through the bureaucratic thickets of the Food and Drug Administration. (Kaplan, 4/5)

Stat: 5 Questions For Scott Gottlieb At His FDA Confirmation Hearing

Dr. Scott Gottlieb makes no apologies for his work with the pharma industry. He's proud to say he's helped launch a bevy of biotech startups. And he believes that his experience financing and advising drug companies can help him be a smarter, savvier commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. He'll get a chance to make that case on Wednesday at his confirmation hearing. (Kaplan, 4/5)

The Connecticut Mirror: Westporter Gottlieb To Face Senate Scrutiny Of His Bid To Head FDA

Sen. Chris Murphy will introduce Scott Gottlieb, a Westport resident and candidate to head the Food and Drug Administration, to fellow members of the Senate panel that's key to his confirmation – but that won't keep the nominee from having a bit of a rough ride among Democrats. (Radelat, 4/4)

The Wall Street Journal: Democratic Senators Voice Opposition To Trump's FDA Nominee

Two Democratic senators announced Tuesday that they oppose President Donald Trump's nominee to run the Food and Drug Administration, saying that he is too close financially to the pharmaceutical industry and unlikely to strengthen regulation of the opioid painkiller industry. Sens. Edward J. Markey (D., Mass.) and Sherrod Brown (D., Ohio) are the first senators known to have publicly opposed the nominee, Dr. Scott Gottlieb. (Burton, 4/4)

12. A Look At Where Trump Has Diverged From Obama On Health Policy

Stat is tracking five key health areas to identify where things are changing, where it's unclear and where it's just more of the same.

Stat: Obama Vs. Trump: Early Report Card On How Health And Science Are Changing
In less than three months in office, President Trump has made abundantly clear he will not approach health and medicine the same way his predecessor did. He is proposing dramatic funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health. He has already tried — and so far failed — to repeal much of the Affordable Care Act, Barack Obama's signature legislation. The early signals of how he'll handle the opioid crisis have recovery advocates on edge. ... Three months ago, STAT looked at five key areas and assessed whether Trump was likely to diverge from Obama — or not. Now we're revisiting those issues, focusing on the new president's record so far. (Scott, 4/4)

Meanwhile, the former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration speaks out against Trump's budget cuts —

Stat: Robert Califf: Trump Budget Proposal Is 'Ridiculous'
Dr. Robert Califf, the former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, on Tuesday called President Trump's budget blueprint "ridiculous" and implored the scientific community to "speak out against it." Califf made the remarks while moderating a panel at a meeting on how clinical trial data should be shared within and beyond the research community. The two-day meeting was hosted by the New England Journal of Medicine, one of the top peer-reviewed medical journals. (Swetlitz, 4/4)

QUALITY

13. Study Finds Heavy Turnover Among Physicians In Medicare ACOs

Medicare hopes to use the accountable care organization to coordinate care so that quality is improved and costs lowered. But the research suggests that the design of the ACO may need to pay special attention to physicians.

Modern Healthcare: Inspecting The Role Of The Physician In ACOs
As delivery system reform experts puzzle over what makes accountable care organizations successful, they might want to pay more attention to the physicians in those organizations, suggests a study published Monday in Health Affairs. The study found significant physician churn from year to year, as well as an uneven distribution of

patients among physicians in one Medicare Pioneer ACO. The results raised questions about the structure of ACOs—a payment model touted by many and supported by the CMS—and their ability to achieve the goals of lowering costs while improving quality. (Whitman, 4/4)

WOMEN'S HEALTH

14. Deal Bars Digital Ad Firm From Targeting Anti-Abortion Messages To Mass. Women Entering Reproductive Health Facilities

Also in the news, abortion politics heat up in Virginia as Ed Gillespie's statements on the issue draw scrutiny as he makes a bid for the governor's mansion.

The Associated Press: Agreement Bars Ad Firm From Targeting Women Entering Clinics

A settlement with a digital advertising company bars the firm from using a technology called geofencing to direct anti-abortion messages toward women entering reproductive health facilities in Massachusetts, the state attorney general said Tuesday. The agreement was reached after Attorney General Maura Healey investigated whether Copley Advertising or John Flynn, a Brookline man identified as the firm's manager and sole employee, was violating the state's consumer protection laws. Copley denied any wrongdoing. (Salsberg, 4/4)

The Washington Post: Gillespie: 'I Would Like To See Abortion Be Banned'

Republican strategist Ed Gillespie opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest and when the mother's life is at risk. That was his position in 2014, when he nearly unseated Sen. Mark R. Warner (D). And that's his stance now, as he seeks the governor's mansion. But abortion rights groups contend that Gillespie is taking a harder line because he recently said he would like to see abortion "banned." (Vozzella, 4/4)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

15. States Facing Bed Shortages For Opioid Crisis Turn To Waiver From Obscure Medicaid Rule

An outdated Medicaid regulation -- intended to discourage "institutions for mental disease" -- prohibits the use of federal dollars for addiction treatment provided in facilities with more than 16 beds. Outlets report on the epidemic out of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well.

Stateline: States Seek Medicaid Dollars For Addiction Treatment Beds

But in the throes of an opioid epidemic that killed more than 33,000 people in 2015 alone, the nation's supply of residential treatment slots falls far short of the number needed to serve everyone who walks in, gets dropped off by police, or is transferred from a hospital or crisis center. Waitlists persist almost everywhere, primarily because of a growing number of people addicted to heroin and prescription painkillers. To boost the number of beds available for low-income residents, the federal government has granted California, Maryland, Massachusetts and New York a waiver of an obscure Medicaid rule that prohibits the use of federal dollars for addiction treatment provided in facilities with more than 16 beds. (Vestal, 4/5)

The Associated Press: House Bill Aimed At Substance Abuse Insurance Coverage

House lawmakers have unanimously approved legislation aimed at ensuring that people struggling with drug addiction get the help they need. Supporters of the bill say denial of insurance coverage for substance abuse treatment is a major source of failed treatment efforts by people seeking help, and also a cause of the shortage of adequate treatment facilities in Delaware. (Chase, 4/4)

The Philadelphia Inquirer: Study: Drug Monitoring Databases Reduce Opioid Prescribing

Requiring doctors to register with state database programs that track patients' opioid prescriptions reduced the amount of addictive painkillers Medicaid patients receive — and saved money, according to a new study. Simply mandating that physicians register with the state databases led to a nearly 10 percent reduction in prescriptions for the most potent painkillers, the researchers reported in the April issue of Health Affairs, using data collected from 2011 to 2014. (Sapatkin, 4/4)

The Columbus Dispatch: State Of The State: Kasich Wants \$20 Million To Fight Addiction

Declaring drug addiction “a common enemy,” Ohio Gov. John Kasich announced in his State of the State address Tuesday night that he is requesting up to \$20 million in funding to help develop promising treatments and technologies to tackle the state's opioid crisis. (Ludlow and Siegel, 4/5)

16. Zika's Not Just 'Last Year's Problem': Sobering Report Details Virus's Effects On U.S. Women

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released the largest and most comprehensive study about Zika's effects on pregnant women.

The New York Times: One In 10 Pregnant Women With Zika In U.S. Have Babies With Birth Defects

One in 10 pregnant women in the continental United States with a confirmed Zika infection had a baby with brain damage or other serious birth defects, according to the most comprehensive report to date on American pregnancies during the Zika crisis. (Belluck, 4/4)

The Washington Post: Zika Poses Even Greater Risk For Birth Defects Than Was Previously Known, CDC Reports

Women infected during the first trimester of pregnancy had an even higher risk of birth defects, about 15 percent, according to the analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These estimates are higher than what U.S. health officials have previously reported and underscore the serious risk for birth defects posed by Zika virus infection during pregnancy. With warm weather, a new mosquito season and summer travel approaching, prevention is crucial to protecting the health of mothers and babies, said Anne Schuchat, the CDC's acting director. (Sun, 4/4)

NPR: 51 Babies Born With Zika-Related Birth Defects In The U.S. In 2016

"Although Zika may seem like last year's problem, or an issue confined to Brazil, there have been more than 1,600 cases in pregnant women reported here in the U.S.," says the acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Anne Schuchat. (Doupleff, 4/4)

CQ Roll Call: Birth Defects Present In 5 Percent Of Zika Babies, CDC Finds

About 5 percent of infants born to women who were exposed to the Zika virus while pregnant in 2016 had birth defects, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday. The study of U.S. pregnancies affected by the virus is the largest of its kind in the short time that Zika has been a priority for national researchers. The CDC hopes it will send a message about the risks posed to pregnant women who travel to areas with active Zika transmission. (Siddons, 4/4)

The Miami Herald: Yes, You Should Be Wearing Insect Repellent To Help Prevent The Spread Of Zika

Stephanie Milbhauer is four and a half months pregnant with her third child and is seriously considering "temporarily relocating" to her family home in Ohio as the rainy season approaches and the Zika virus is expected to resurface. (Teproff, 4/4)

17. Alarmed By Superbug Outbreak, Senator Wants More Information On Tainted Scopes

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) is asking device manufacturer Olympus for details on how it fixed the scopes that led to an outbreak last year.

Los Angeles Times: U.S. Senator Seeks Data On Infection Outbreak Linked To 'Repaired' Olympus Scope

Saying she was alarmed by a new superbug outbreak, a U.S. senator on Tuesday asked Olympus for data showing its redesigned medical scope was safe. In a letter, Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) asked the Japanese device manufacturer for more information about a recent outbreak that sickened five patients in Europe. (Peterson, 4/4)

In other public health news —

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Chicago Sun Times: Women Need To Heed The Warning Signs Of Cardiovascular Disease

And when a woman's heart starts to feel a tad different with every beat (even occasionally) or they can't get rid of that annoying little tingle in their arm, too often a woman will find an excuse not to see a doctor about it. What they seldom consider is that it might be the beginning of heart disease. And for millions of women, that's exactly what it is...In fact, the American Heart Association states that one in three adult women are living with some form of cardiovascular disease and may or may not realize it. The disease remains the number one killer of women in the U.S. (Despres, 4/4)

NPR: Shoulder-Fired Weapons Rattle The Shooter's Brain

The U.S. military is trying to figure out whether certain heavy weapons are putting U.S. troops in danger. The concern centers on the possibility of brain injuries from shoulder-fired weapons like the Carl Gustaf, a recoilless rifle that resembles a bazooka and is powerful enough to blow up a tank. (Hamilton, 4/5)

STATE WATCH

18. Texas House OKs Bill Ensuring Equal Coverage For Mental And Physical Health Care

The Texas legislature is also taking on other health-related issues, with hearings being held on postpartum depression and narrowing the definition of "psychologists." Meanwhile, in Ohio, a Columbus company purchases a financially troubled provider of mental health services.

The Texas Tribune: House Approves Bill Focused On Mental Health Insurance Benefits
Texas House members endorsed a bill Tuesday that would prevent health insurance companies from offering mental health benefits differently from medical benefits and offer more help for consumers who believe their insurance is wrongly denying them coverage. (Evans, 4/4)

Houston Chronicle: House OKs Bill On Mental Health Insurance Benefits
The House tentatively approved legislation Tuesday that would ensure Texans have equal insurance coverage for mental and physical health care. The legislation, authored by Rep. Four Price, is the first of several that he has filed on mental health care following a series of interim committee hearings on the issue. Price, R-Amarillo, told colleagues Tuesday that insurance companies are not adequately covering mental health services despite parity laws. (Cobler, 4/4)

The Texas Tribune: Postpartum Depression Bills Get Hearing Before House Lawmakers
House Public Health Committee members heard testimony on three measures — House Bill 2466, House Bill 2604 and House Bill 2135 — that would aim to increase access to postpartum depression screenings and treatment for mothers. (Evans, 4/4)

The Texas Tribune: Texas Senators To Debate Bill That Would Narrow Definition Of "Psychology"
A yoga instructor. A fortune teller. A political consultant. Under current Texas law, all three could call themselves "psychologists" because of some of the services they each provide and because doing so is protected speech. (Rocha, 4/5)

The Columbus Dispatch: Columbus Firm Buys Assets Of Troubled Mental-Health Services Provider
The assets of a financially troubled provider of mental-health services for people in Delaware and Morrow counties have been sold to a Columbus agency that does similar work, leaving some patients uncertain about who will treat them. (Narciso, 4/4)

19. State Highlights: Iowa Lawmakers Vote To Raise Own Premiums After Press Reports; Fla. Safety-Net Hospitals Oppose Proposed Budget Cuts

Outlets report on news from Iowa, Florida, Kentucky, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Tennessee.

Iowa Public Radio: GOP Lawmaker Calls Reporting on Legislators' Health Insurance Premiums 'Fake News'

Some state lawmakers will pay more for their health insurance under a bill approved unanimously in the Iowa House today, after an earlier unanimous vote in the Senate. (Russell, 4/4)

Health News Florida: Safety Net Hospitals Oppose Potential Cuts

Leaders of safety-net hospitals from across the state gathered Monday at the Capitol to argue against potential cuts in Medicaid payments. The House last week released an initial budget that included \$672.3 million in Medicaid reimbursement cuts, while a Senate plan included about \$309.1 million in cuts. Safety-net hospitals include public, teaching and children's hospitals and serve large numbers of Medicaid patients and uninsured people. (4/4)

The Associated Press: Support Surges For Smoking Ban In Tobacco Country

More than seven in 10 people in one of the nation's largest tobacco-producing states support a statewide smoking ban in most public places. It's the highest level of support ever recorded in polling by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky since the group first asked the question in 2011. Anti-smoking advocates hope the numbers will fuel a renewed push for a public smoking ban in a state that leads the country in the number of tobacco-related cancer cases per 100,000 people. (4/4)

Stat: AstraZeneca Is Sued Over 'Baby Leads' Used For Medicaid Fraud

The New York attorney general joined a whistleblower lawsuit accusing an AstraZeneca unit of defrauding Medicaid by obtaining confidential data on infants in order to boost sales of a key medicine. From 2007 through 2011, the lawsuit alleges that the MedImmune unit worked closely with a specialty pharmacy called Trinity Homecare to generate prescriptions for Synagis, which is given to premature infants to protect them from contracting a severe respiratory virus known as RSV. At the time, Trinity actively dealt with many New York City public hospitals, where infants were insured by Medicaid. (Silverman, 4/4)

The Philadelphia Inquirer: A Penn Nurse Tackles Ageism In Health Care

What's the first statistic that medical professionals mention when they talk about patients? It's the patient's age, Rebecca Trotta, a Ph.D.-level nurse, pointed out in a lecture Monday to colleagues at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. She urged them to consider how differently they would think about these two patients: a 57-year-old man who had fallen and had a change in mental status, and an 87-year-old man with the same symptoms. Chances are, she said, that they would instantly make unconscious assumptions about where those two patients were headed. They were much more likely to assume that the older man was frail, had dementia, and would wind

up in a nursing home. Could it be that what she called "intrinsic ageism" makes such a negative outcome more likely? (Burling, 4/4)

The Oregonian: Eye Clinic Manager Convicted In Huge Health Care Fraud: Puppet Of Father Or Partner In Crime?

A 41-year-old man who cheated public and private health insurance plans and the Internal Revenue Service out of \$2.5 million over seven years at his father's eye clinic should spend at least 2 1/2 years in federal prison, a prosecutor argued Tuesday. But a defense lawyer countered that Anthony Curtis Neal suffers from autism spectrum disorder and was acting as a "servant" for his "manipulative," "monstrous" and "distorted" father. Dr. Dean Elton Neal, 80, died from a stroke in May 2015 before federal prosecutors could charge the ophthalmologist. (Bernstein, 4/4)

Nashville Tennessean: Intermedix Buys WPC Healthcare

Intermedix is acquiring WPC Healthcare to strengthen its data analytics and machine learning capabilities. Intermedix, which moved most of its top executives to Nashville in 2015, expects the deal to help fuse clinical, financial and operational data into the decisions that health care providers make about revenue cycle management, or the complex health care billing process, said CEO Joel Portice. WPC Healthcare is a Brentwood-based company that collects data for a variety of uses in health care, ranging from technology that helps clinicians identify people with sepsis earlier to helping cities think about where mosquito populations might surge during warm months. (Fletcher, 4/4)

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The Oregonian: 2 Portland Cafe Workers Contract Hepatitis A; Health Officials Investigating

Multnomah County health officials are investigating two hepatitis A cases among workers at a pair of Portland Cup & Saucer Cafes. The first of the cases was reported to the county health department on March 20, and the other was reported Monday, said county spokeswoman Julie Sullivan-Springhetti. Officials advise people who ate or drank at the cafes on specific dates in late March to contact their health care provider, she said. Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease usually spread when someone ingests the virus from drinks, food or other things contaminated by an infected person's fecal matter, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It can be a mild sickness, lasting a few weeks, or be more severe and last several months, the CDC said. (Ryan, 4/4)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG WATCH

20. By Engaging Payers Before Setting Price, One Drug Company Wins Praise Despite \$37K-A-Year Cost

News outlets report on stories related to pharmaceutical drug pricing.

Stat: How A \$37,000-A-Year Medicine Sets A Good Model For Drug Pricing
Shortly before his company won the right last week to sell a new drug for severe eczema, Dr. Len Schleifer made a brash promise. He vowed to price the medicine "responsibly" and avoid the anger that high drug prices have stirred. "You'll get to judge me and see how we do," he told me. To his credit, Schleifer appears to have delivered. The drug, called Dupixent, has a list price of \$37,000 a year. This isn't cheap. But Regeneron Pharmaceuticals could have charged still more, since other companies charge roughly \$50,000 a year for older, less effective psoriasis treatments. (Silverman, 4/3)

CNN: Drug Pricing: When \$65,000 A Year For A Drug Is Applauded
Two new drugs were cleared to hit the market last week: an eczema drug that will cost \$37,000 per year and one for multiple sclerosis that will cost \$65,000. The drugs drew both praise and criticism for their five-digit price tags. Researchers and patient organizations applauded the prices, which were cheaper than similar drugs on the market. They hoped the prices would please insurers and make the drugs more widely available. (Nedelman, 4/3)

ProPublica: Tom Price Intervened on Rule That Would Hurt Drug Profits, The Same Day He Acquired Drug Stock
On the same day the stockbroker for then-Georgia Congressman Tom Price bought him up to \$90,000 of stock in six pharmaceutical companies last year, Price arranged to call a top U.S. health official, seeking to scuttle a controversial rule that could have hurt the firms' profits and driven down their share prices, records obtained by ProPublica show. (Faturechi, 3/31)

Bloomberg: Trump FDA Nominee Wants Lower Drug Costs With More Generics
President Donald Trump's pick to head the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is among the most vigorous advocates of lowering drug costs by approving cheap generics faster, an initiative aimed directly at the profit centers of major companies. Scott Gottlieb, a former FDA deputy commissioner, would make streamlining approvals his top priority, according to a person familiar with the administration's thinking. He's particularly focused on complex medications that combine old drugs with newer delivery devices, as well as those with unusually complicated formulations. (Langreth and Edney, 3/29)

The Wall Street Journal: Don't Write Off Pharma's Nightmare Scenario
Dismissing drug-price concerns could leave investors with a surprise bill. Sixteen Senate Democrats sponsored the Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs Act, a new legislative proposal that was introduced last week. It contains a familiar list of policy prescriptions such as enabling Medicare to dictate pricing more aggressively than is currently allowed, relaxing rules that govern importation of drugs and eliminating tax breaks for direct advertising to consumers. There are new wrinkles as well: The bill would require more disclosure from charities that help patients pay for high-cost medicines. (Grant, 4/3)

The Wall Street Journal: New And Improved Drug Prices May Lower Political Side Effects

No surprise here: Breakthrough drugs remain expensive. But the latest round of regulatory approvals suggests that the pricing trend is moderating. Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Sanofi announced Food and Drug Administration approval for their new dermatitis drug, Dupixent, on Tuesday morning. Later in the day, Roche announced it won FDA approval for the multiple sclerosis treatment Ocrevus. Analysts expect both drugs could top \$4 billion in annual revenues by 2022, according to a recent analysis from the forecasting firm Evaluate Pharma. (Grant, 3/29)

Stat: Despite Drug Price Acrimony, New Drugs Carry Steep Price Tags
Politicians have heaped fire and brimstone upon pharmaceutical companies for increasing the price of their products, some of which were approved decades ago. But far less ire has been directed at price tags on newly approved treatments — many of which continue to rise. New cancer drugs cost about 17 times more than they did 40 years ago, according to Kaiser Health News, and a drug for spinal muscular atrophy approved in 2016 is one of the most expensive products on the market, the Boston Globe reported. (Swetlitz, 3/30)

Politico: Accelerating Drug Approvals In The Trump Era

Big changes could be coming to the way new drugs are approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The Trump administration and incoming new leadership at the FDA, coupled with the implementation of the 21st Century Cures Act, signed into law by President Obama in December, may shake up the status quo for the prescription drug approval process. The Cures Act enables faster drug approvals by expanding the kinds of evidence, beyond traditional clinical trials, that the FDA can consider when reviewing drug applications. (4/3)

Reuters: The Cost Of Cancer: New Drugs Show Success At A Steep Price

Newer cancer drugs that enlist the body's immune system are improving the odds of survival, but competition between them is not reining in prices that can now top

\$250,000 a year. The drugs' success for patients is the result of big bets in cancer therapy made by Bristol-Myers Squibb Co, Merck & Co Inc and Roche Holding AG, among others in big pharma. The industry's pipeline of cancer drugs expanded by 63 percent between 2005 and 2015, according to the QuintilesIMS Institute, and a good number are reaching the market. (Beasley, 4/3)

Politico Pro: Trump Could Turn To Drug Prices After Obamacare Defeat
Pharma stayed out of the bruising fight over Obamacare repeal, but the bill's demise could turn into the industry's worst nightmare: a big bipartisan fight over drug prices, with President Donald Trump leading the charge. Trump, who has repeatedly promised action on drug prices, is looking for a policy win after the repeal debacle — and drug pricing is an issue that Republican and Democratic voters care about. (Karlin-Smith, 3/31)

Stat: More Drug Makers Are Posting Compassionate Use Policies
Over the past six months, more drug makers have begun posting their policies for gaining greater access to experimental medicines, according to a new analysis. However, more than half of all pharmaceutical manufacturers have yet to take this step to improve disclosure. Specifically, 47 percent of 98 drug makers have posted a compassionate use policy on their web sites, compared with 19 percent last October. However, 84 percent of the 25 companies with a market capitalization of greater than \$10 billion posted policies. This was up from 52 percent last fall. (Silverman, 4/4)

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Stat: Nevada Bill Targets Drug Price Hikes, But Only For Diabetes Meds
A Nevada lawmaker has introduced a bill to fight the rising cost of medicines, one of dozens state legislators to attempt such a move. But this one has a twist — the legislation targets only companies that make diabetes drugs and insulin. Specifically, the bill requires drug makers to report pricing histories; disclose a slew of costs, such as research, manufacturing, and patient assistance; and notify state officials and insurers at least 90 days before prices are increased above the inflation rate for the preceding year. (Silverman, 3/30)

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New Hampshire Public Radio: In Nashua, Hassan Touts Bill To Reign In Prescription Drug Costs
U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan was in Nashua Friday highlighting her new proposal to lower the cost of prescription drugs. Under the measure, the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services would be required to monitor pricing spikes to ensure drug costs aren't rising unfairly. (Sutherland, 3/31)

Stat: Arizona Law Is First Allowing Drug Makers To Promote Off-Label

In what some observers are calling a misguided effort, Arizona has become the first state in the nation to pass a law allowing drug makers to promote their medicines for so-called off-label uses — so long as the information given doctors is truthful. Interestingly, the law was hatched by the Goldwater Institute, the same think tank that spearheaded the controversial Right to Try laws designed to give patients early access to experimental medicines. And the think tank is vowing to duplicate that campaign by introducing off-label bills around the country. (Silverman, 3/29)

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21. Perspectives: FDA Nominee's Industry Ties And Contempt For Caution A Danger To Patients

Read recent commentaries about drug-cost issues.

Stat: Gottlieb As FDA Commissioner Would Be Music To Pharma's Ears

When President Trump nominated Scott Gottlieb for commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, you could almost hear the sigh of relief that rippled through the health care community. That's because Gottlieb isn't Jim O'Neill, whose name had also been floated for commissioner. O'Neill has no background in health care except as a venture capitalist, and thinks that the way to speed new drugs to the market is for the FDA to drop any requirements that drug makers demonstrate that their products actually work. Gottlieb, in contrast, is an internal medicine physician and a drug company insider, who presumably knows you need at least some scientific evidence for efficacy. (Judith Garber and Shannon Brownlee, 4/4)

Bloomberg: Pharma Tests Preemptive Discounting

Sanofi, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. and Roche Holding AG are doing something very un-pharma: They're leaving pricing power on the table. Let's be clear: Sanofi and Regeneron are charging \$37,000 a year for their skin-clearing drug Dupixent, and Roche is charging \$65,000 a year for its Multiple Sclerosis (MS) drug Ocrevus, both of which the FDA approved earlier this week. That's not exactly chump change. (Max Nisen, 3/30)

The Hill: Drug Importation From Canada Increases Patient Risk With No Guarantee Of Lower Prices

Drug pricing is once again being debated in Washington and in state capitals. One of

the proposals on the table – importation of medicines from Canada – poses dangerous patient risks. This proposal is intended to reduce the price Americans pay for medicines. But the risks to patient safety far outweigh any cost savings – which are likely to be minimal anyway. That is why four former commissioners of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent a letter to Congress on March 16 cautioning against such an approach. (Ronald T. Piervincenzi, 3/31)

RealClear Health: Another Sneaky PBM Practice Needs To End

When the nation's largest pharmacy benefit manager (PBM), Express-Scripts, and the insurance giant Anthem, Inc. sued each other last year over how much each company made in profits, the curtain was raised on the oversized role PBMs play in determining what consumers pay for their prescription drugs. (Stacey Worthy, 4/5)

The Baltimore Sun: Md. Bill Threatens Generic Drug Competition

Jokes about doctors delivering good news and bad news are common. I have good news and bad news to deliver, but it is no joke. The good news is that your prescription medicine costs can be contained by greater generic drug competition. The bad news is that our attorney general is doing all he can to kill that competition. There is a bill backed by Attorney General Brian Frosh, House Bill 631, moving through the Maryland General Assembly propelled by an unhealthy mixture of bad economics and political theater. It threatens the one sector of our health care economy that is saving all of us money — generic medicines. (Steve Hershey, 4/3)

Chicago Tribune: With Trumpcare Off The Table, Let's Address The High Cost Of Prescription Drugs

Now that the Trump-Ryan alternative to Obamacare has failed, the administration and Congress are turning their attention to other matters. But significant work remains in order to shore up our national health care system. Chief among the challenges is the rising cost of prescription drugs. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll even found that 60 percent of Americans — including a majority of Republicans — think lowering prescription drug prices should be a top priority for President Donald Trump and Congress. (Raja Krishnamoorthi, 4/3)

Bloomberg: Incyte Is Smart To Date Around

When it comes to cancer drugs, monogamy is overrated. Incyte Corp. recently announced an expanded collaboration with Merck & Co. on late-stage studies of combinations of immune-oncology (IO) drugs, which use a patient's immune system to fight cancer. Two days later, Incyte said it would also run similar late-stage trials with Merck's bitter IO rival Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. It already had earlier-stage trials

ongoing with similar medicines from Roche Holding AG and AstraZeneca PLC. (Max Nisen, 4/4)

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

22. Different Takes On The Latest GOP Health Law Repeal Talks; Improving Coverage

Opinion writers take a hard look at the GOP's latest crack at health care, the policies in play and what might be left on the cutting-room floor.

The Washington Post: What's In Republicans' New Health-Care Deal? We (And They) Have No Idea.

President Trump and House Republican leaders want to take another crack at a health-care reform deal that went up in flames last month. Except it looks as though they're not really sure how to fix what went wrong — that is, a total implosion of their attempt to build a single-party coalition of moderate Republicans (who thought the original bill would take away too much coverage) and conservative Republicans (who thought it wouldn't go far enough). (Amber Phillips, 4/4)

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Huffington Post: Emerging GOP Obamacare Repeal Would Mean Sick People Pay (Much) More

Republicans have spent most of the past seven years vowing to protect people with pre-existing conditions, even as they have pledged to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. ... Now Republicans are trying to bring back Obamacare repeal. And the emerging deal would make a mockery of those promises — by forcing people with medical problems to pay more for their health care, and in many cases leaving them unable to get insurance at all. It would be a breach of faith, but also a revealing window into what Republicans who support this measure think the world should look like. (Jonathan Cohn, 4/4)

The Fiscal Times: New Obamacare Repeal Plan Would Leave The Hard Decisions To The States

It can be hard to know which of President Trump's tweets to take seriously sometimes, but evidently, his claim that the White House and Republicans in Congress are still working on health care reform after last month's debacle with the American Health Care Act was true. (Robert Garver, 4/4)

Los Angeles Times: When It Comes To Healthcare, Republicans Need To Take A Hippocratic Oath To Do No Harm

When I became a doctor, I went to work in an emergency room that admitted and treated the kind of hard-working, low-income farmworker families I grew up with. For many of them, the ER was their first and last resort after avoiding the doctor for years because they had no health insurance. We didn't check a patient's political affiliation before treating them. I didn't check the party affiliation of the other doctors and nurses, either, and they didn't ask me for mine. Rather, we worked together as a team, following through on the Hippocratic Oath we had taken to treat patients to the best of our ability and, above all, to "do no harm." ... If only politicians were required to take an oath to do no harm. (Raul Ruiz, 4/5)

Huffington Post: More Proof Trump Doesn't Know Or Doesn't Care What Obamacare Repeal Would Mean

Deprive 24 million people of health insurance. Or don't. If you're President Donald Trump, it would seem, either outcome is just fine. During an interview with Financial Times that appeared over the weekend, Trump said he hadn't given up on repealing the Affordable Care Act, even though House health care legislation fell apart last month when it didn't have the votes to pass. ... In the FT interview, Trump said he hoped Freedom Caucus members would come around. But if they don't, Trump said, he'll simply cut a deal with Democrats instead. ... The idea that Trump could so easily toggle between appeasing the Freedom Caucus or working with Democrats is difficult to fathom, given what each side wants. (Jonathan Cohn, 4/3)

Jackson (Miss.) Clarion-Ledger: How Can We Improve Health Care Coverage?

As the state with the highest poverty rate and the lowest median income, it should be no surprise that Mississippi has the highest medical debt of all states. ... Medical debt in our state remains the leading cause of personal bankruptcies, according to the Mississippi Health Advocacy Program. State leaders chose not to expand Medicaid to adults in poverty, so we continue to have a large number of people without health insurance. (Lynn Evans, 4/2)

23. Viewpoints: Declaring War On Alzheimer's; Market Realities Of The Opioid Epidemic

A collection of public health opinions on health care from around the country.

The Wall Street Journal: The FDA Can Declare War On Alzheimer's

'If we had put a war on neurologic diseases at the same time we declared a war on cancer, we probably would not be having this conversation.' Those are the wise words

of Janet Woodcock, director of the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, before Congress last month. Dr. Woodcock is correct. While the past two decades have brought breakthrough treatments for cancer, HIV and heart disease, no new treatments for Alzheimer's disease have been approved in nearly 15 years. (George Vradenburg and Howard Fillit, 4/4)

The Washington Post: When Heroin Kills, The Appeal Grows — And Policing The Drug Becomes Harder

At the retail end of the global heroin trade, local heroin rings repackage pounds of the drug into single-serve doses and push the product to its final destination: the user. From there, the next stop is often a hospital emergency room or a morgue, as an epidemic of heroin-related overdoses and deaths continues its creep across the country. In Virginia, an intensive crackdown on heroin rings has shed new light on the relationship between drug dealer and user, providing insight into why that last link in the heroin trafficking chain has become so deadly. (Courtland Milloy, 4/4)

The Columbus Dispatch: Ending Flood Of Opioids

Gov. John Kasich's new rules limiting the amount of narcotic painkillers that doctors can prescribe — to seven days' worth for adults and five days for minors — is a pragmatic approach toward fighting Ohio's devastating plague of drug addiction and fatal overdoses. We need to do something and fast; Ohio led the nation in 2015 with 3,050 lives lost to opioid overdose deaths. This is an addiction that can happen to anyone: teens, professionals, suburban moms. A person gets injured, gets a painkiller from a well-meaning doctor, then gets addicted. When they can no longer get the drug through legal means, they turn to street drugs, typically cheap and plentiful heroin. Or kids find a stash of unused painkillers in Grandma's medicine cabinet. (4/5)

NPR: Shortcuts In Drug Testing Can Increase Risk To Patients

We all want breakthroughs in medicine. I've never met someone who doesn't. Even with all the progress we have seen in medicine, millions of people suffer, or have family members who suffer, from diseases that are making their lives worse or threatening their lives. Time means something different to these people. They do not have the luxury of waiting patiently while researchers test new drugs. (Harlan M. Krumholz and Joseph S. Ross, 4/4)

The Des Moines Register: Stop Underfunding Of Mental Health

Jewish scripture tells the story of the people of Israel standing on the edge of the promised land. Before they enter and create a new nation, Moses gives them one final challenge: "I have set before you life and death. ... Choose life so that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19, NRSV). Today, Iowa faces a choice. We can continue to underfund mental health care services, which for too many Iowans will

mean death. Or we can have the courage to fix a broken system and give life. (Rev. Dr. Dave Switon and Rev. Travis Stanley, 4/4)

Stat: Should Insurance Cover Cosmetic Surgery?

Should insurance cover breast augmentation, the procedure commonly known as a boob job? Most people would say “no, of course not.” That’s a cosmetic procedure, and health insurance shouldn’t pay for a procedure done to make someone look better. But what if it is part of breast reconstruction after breast cancer surgery, or part of gender reassignment surgery for a transgender patient? (Jules Lipoff, 4/4)

The Texas Tribune: A Teen’s Death — And A Failure Of Policy

A Texas teen was killed early Sunday morning in Houston after a van hit her. Nobody wanted that. Nobody intended to put her in a foster care situation she would run from. To try to house her temporarily in a state office building. Or to have her running with a gaggle of kids walking down a Houston street shortly before 3 o’clock on Sunday morning. (Ross Ramsey, 4/5)

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April 14, 2017

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Subject: KHN Morning Briefing: May 22, 2017

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KAISER HEALTH NEWS

Morning Briefing

Monday, May 22, 2017

Check Kaiser Health News online for the latest headlines

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KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

1. Republicans Race The Clock On Health Care — But The Calendar Is Not Helping

The delays in pushing through a bill to replace Obamacare are beginning to back up other key items on the congressional calendar. (Julie Rovner, 5/22)

2. New York State Wants Its Prescription Drug Money Back — Or Else

A new law gives Medicaid regulators power to threaten drugmakers with cost-effectiveness scrutiny unless they grant additional rebates. (Julie Appleby, 5/22)

3. Who Will Care For Abril? Parents Fear For Their Disabled Child If They Are Deported

Anticipating a broader immigration crackdown, undocumented families are hiring lawyers and scrambling to make contingency plans for their seriously ill U.S.-born kids. (Jocelyn Wiener, 5/22)

4. Political Cartoon: 'Sign Off?'

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Sign Off?'" by Mike Lester.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

RACING THE CLOCK

Delays with health law
Throw Congress' calendar
Into disarray.

- Anonymous

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

Summaries Of The News:

ADMINISTRATION NEWS

5. Trump Budget Slashes Medicaid Funding, Rejecting Some Conservatives' Pleas To Save Expansion

The White House also wants to give states more flexibility when it comes to imposing work requirements for people in the program.

The Washington Post: Trump To Propose Big Cuts To Safety-Net In New Budget, Slashing Medicaid And Opening Door To Other Limits
President Trump's first major budget proposal on Tuesday will include massive cuts to Medicaid and call for changes to anti-poverty programs that would give states new power to limit a range of benefits, people familiar with the planning said, despite growing unease in Congress about cutting the safety net. For Medicaid, the state-federal program that provides health care to low-income Americans, Trump's budget plan would follow through on a bill passed by House Republicans to cut more than \$800 billion over 10 years. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this could cut off Medicaid benefits for about 10 million people over the next decade. (Paletta, 5/21)

The Associated Press: Huge Cuts To Food Stamps Part Of Trump's Budget Proposal
Trump is also targeting the Medicaid health program that provides care to the poor and disabled, and nursing home care to millions of older people who could not otherwise afford it. The House had a bitter debate on health care before a razor-thin 217-213 passage in early May of a GOP health bill that included more than \$800 billion in Medicaid cuts over the coming decade. Key Republicans are not interested in another round of cuts to the program. "I would think that the health care bill is our best policy statement on Medicaid going forward," said Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over the program. (Taylor, 5/21)

CNN: Trump Budget: \$800 Billion In Medicaid Cuts
Donald Trump's budget that is expected to be unveiled on Tuesday will include \$800 billion in cuts to Medicaid. ... The \$800 billion reduction, confirmed to CNN Sunday evening by a senior administration official, assumes that the GOP health care bill that the House passed earlier this month would become law, that official said. (Lee and Luhby, 5/22)

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Modern Healthcare: Trump Budget Proposal Would Slash Medicaid
By cutting Medicaid, Trump is rejecting the calls of some Senate Republicans who asked him not to stop expansion of Medicaid, which funneled billions into cash-

strapped states. Even the most ardent opponents of the Affordable Care Act held out their hands when the federal government offered to subsidize the cost of expanding eligibility for Medicaid. Earlier this month, a bill to repeal the ACA that included massive cuts to Medicaid, passed by a razor-thin 217-213. Key Republicans have signaled they are not interested in another round of cuts to the program. (5/21)

Bloomberg: Trump To Propose Deep Cuts To Anti-Poverty Programs And Medicaid
During the presidential campaign, Trump promised not to cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid. He has already broken that promise on Medicaid by backing cuts to the program called for under the Obamacare repeal bill passed by the House on May 4. The White House has said that the president intends in his budget to keep his pledge on Medicare benefits and Social Security retirement benefits. (Wasson and Dennis, 5/21)

The Hill: Trump Budget Will Slash Medicaid, Food Stamps Programs: Reports
Trump's budget will be released Tuesday, but the proposal is a blueprint for Congress, which appropriates the funds. The Post noted that some Republicans won't back some of the larger cuts Trump will propose. (Carter, 5/21)

6. Hiring Freeze Leaves Nearly 700 Jobs Unfilled At CDC

The vacancies impact public health emergency readiness, infectious disease control and chronic disease prevention programs, The Washington Post reports. Other Trump administration moves at the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health also make headlines today.

The Washington Post: Nearly 700 Vacancies At CDC Because Of Trump Administration's Hiring Freeze

Nearly 700 positions are vacant at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention because of a continuing freeze on hiring that officials and researchers say affects programs supporting local and state public health emergency readiness, infectious disease control and chronic disease prevention. The same restriction remains in place throughout the Health and Human Services Department despite the lifting of a government-wide hiring freeze last month. At the National Institutes of Health, staff say clinical work, patient care and recruitment are suffering. (Sun, 5/19)

The Hill: Health Groups Push FDA Not To Repeal E-Cig Rules

Health groups are lobbying the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to keep in place e-cigarette regulations as Republicans press the administration for a repeal. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and 50 other health groups wrote a letter to Health

and Human Services Secretary Tom Price this week asking him to defend and fully implement the rules finalized under former President Barack Obama. (Wheeler, 5/19)

CQ Roll Call: A Thorny Thicket Of Potential Conflicts For New FDA Chief

The new commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Scott Gottlieb, has deep knowledge of the industries he oversees. That's partly because he has unprecedented professional and financial ties to some of those companies from his career as an industry adviser. The companies that Gottlieb has worked for, advised or invested in encompass nearly every aspect of the FDA's broad mission. Though he has promised to take steps to avoid conflicts of interest, Gottlieb will routinely confront potential ethical dilemmas. Further complicating matters are new policies the FDA is developing that will increase the influence of patient groups and change how clinical trials are conducted, which could offer opportunities for companies to influence the review process. (Siddons, 5/22)

Politico Pro: Republicans Urge Trump To Oust NIH Director Over Embryonic, Stem Cell Research

Forty House Republicans are urging President Donald Trump to fire the director of the NIH over his support for embryonic and stem cell research that they say conflicts with Trump's "pro-life direction." The Republican House members, in a letter led by Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.), question NIH Director Francis Collins' support for embryonic cloning and for stem cell research that involves the destruction of human embryos. (Haberkorn, 5/22)

HEALTH LAW

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7. 'Why The Hell Would We' Continue Insurer Subsidy Payments, Trump Reported To Ask Advisers

Despite the potential political blowback, President Donald Trump is leaning toward cutting off billions in cost-sharing subsidies, according to sources who spoke to Politico. On Monday, there will be a hearing in the court case about the payments.

Politico: Trump Tells Advisers He Wants To End Key Obamacare Subsidies

President Donald Trump has told advisers he wants to end payments of key Obamacare subsidies, a move that could send the health law's insurance markets into a tailspin, according to several sources familiar with the conversations. Many advisers oppose the move because they worry it would backfire politically if people lose their insurance or see huge premium spikes and blame the White House, the sources said.

Trump has said that the bold move could force Congressional Democrats to the table to negotiate an Obamacare replacement. (Dawsey, Haberkorn and Demko, 5/19)

The Hill: Trump Leaning Toward Ending Key ObamaCare Subsidies: Report
President Trump is considering pulling the plug on key ObamaCare subsidies, Politico reported Friday, citing remarks the president has made to advisers...The Trump administration has reportedly told Congress that it will continue the subsidies through May, but it is not clear what will happen after that. If the payments do stop, it could cause premium costs to swell – a reality that would likely deal significant political damage to Trump and Republican lawmakers heading into the 2018 midterm elections. (Greenwood, 5/19)

USA Today: Obamacare Subsidies At Stake In Monday Court Hearing
A Monday court hearing offers the Trump administration its best opportunity to prevent significant increases in health care costs for about 7 million lower-income Americans who buy their plans on the Affordable Care Act exchanges. The administration's next move could prevent these insurance marketplaces from imploding as insurers are deciding which states, if any, to sell insurance in and at what price. (O'Donnell, 5/19)

Morning Consult: Trump Administration, House Set To Update Court In Obamacare Payments Case
The government reimburses insurance companies for offering cost-sharing reduction payments to help lower-income people afford certain health expenses. House Republicans brought a lawsuit against the Obama administration, arguing it improperly funded the subsidies without a specific appropriation from Congress. The administration argued there was a permanent appropriation in the ACA for the payments, but a district judge ruled with Republicans last year. (McIntire, 5/22)

The Hill: Trump Administration Faces Decision On ObamaCare Payments
If the White House drops its appeal in a lawsuit over ObamaCare cost-sharing reduction (CSR) payments to insurers, it could fast-track the end of the health law — something Republicans have made a major campaign promise for years. But administration officials are wary of ending the lawsuit, because they know that doing so would send the insurance markets into chaos. Insurers have warned of massive premium hikes or threatened to exit the ObamaCare exchanges completely if the payments don't continue, and recent polls suggest Republicans would be blamed. (Weixel, 5/21)

8. Senators Mull Short-Term 'Rescue' Bill For Health Law To Stabilize Marketplace

The upper chamber is quietly working toward coming up with their own version of a plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. And Congress awaits the Congressional Budget Office's score for the revised bill that passed the House.

The Associated Press: Senate Republicans Quietly Working On Health Overhaul Bill
Remember the Republican health care bill? Washington is fixated on President Donald Trump's firing of FBI chief James Comey and burgeoning investigations into possible connections between Trump's presidential campaign and Russia. But in closed-door meetings, Senate Republicans are trying to write legislation dismantling President Barack Obama's health care law. (Fram, 5/22)

Politico: McConnell Steps Into Obamacare Firing Line
Mitch McConnell has sidestepped the Russia controversy that's dogged Donald Trump all year and eluded the wrath rained down on Paul Ryan over the GOP's Obamacare repeal effort. But the health care reform battle is now squarely in McConnell's court: He will decide the contents of the Senate's plan, most likely behind closed doors. And he is on the hook for getting something through a sharply divided Senate Republican Conference in the midst of an increasingly imperiled presidency. (Everett and Haberkorn, 5/21)

CQ Roll Call: MacArthur Confident Health Care Bill Will Survive New CBO Score
A lawmaker who helped shape the latest version of the House GOP's health care bill expressed confidence Friday that the ambitious measure remains within the dictates of complex Senate budget rules. Republicans need to keep it within bounds so they can try to pass it over unified Democratic opposition... The Congressional Budget Office on Friday said it will post an estimate on the House health care bill (HR 1628) on Wednesday. GOP leaders added several amendments affecting insurance rules shortly before the vote to win over reluctant Republicans. (Young, 5/19)

The Hill: Ryan Downplays Possibility Of Re-Vote On ObamaCare Repeal
The House will probably not be forced to re-vote on the GOP's ObamaCare replacement bill despite a potential technical issue, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said Friday... The House, despite passing the American Health Care Act two weeks ago, is waiting to send the legislation to the Senate until the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) produces its analysis of the bill. (Hellmann, 5/19)

Kaiser Health News: Republicans Race The Clock On Health Care — But The Calendar Is Not Helping

Back in January, Republicans boasted they would deliver a "repeal and replace" bill for the Affordable Care Act to President Donald Trump's desk by the end of the month. In the interim, that bravado has faded as their efforts stalled and they found out how